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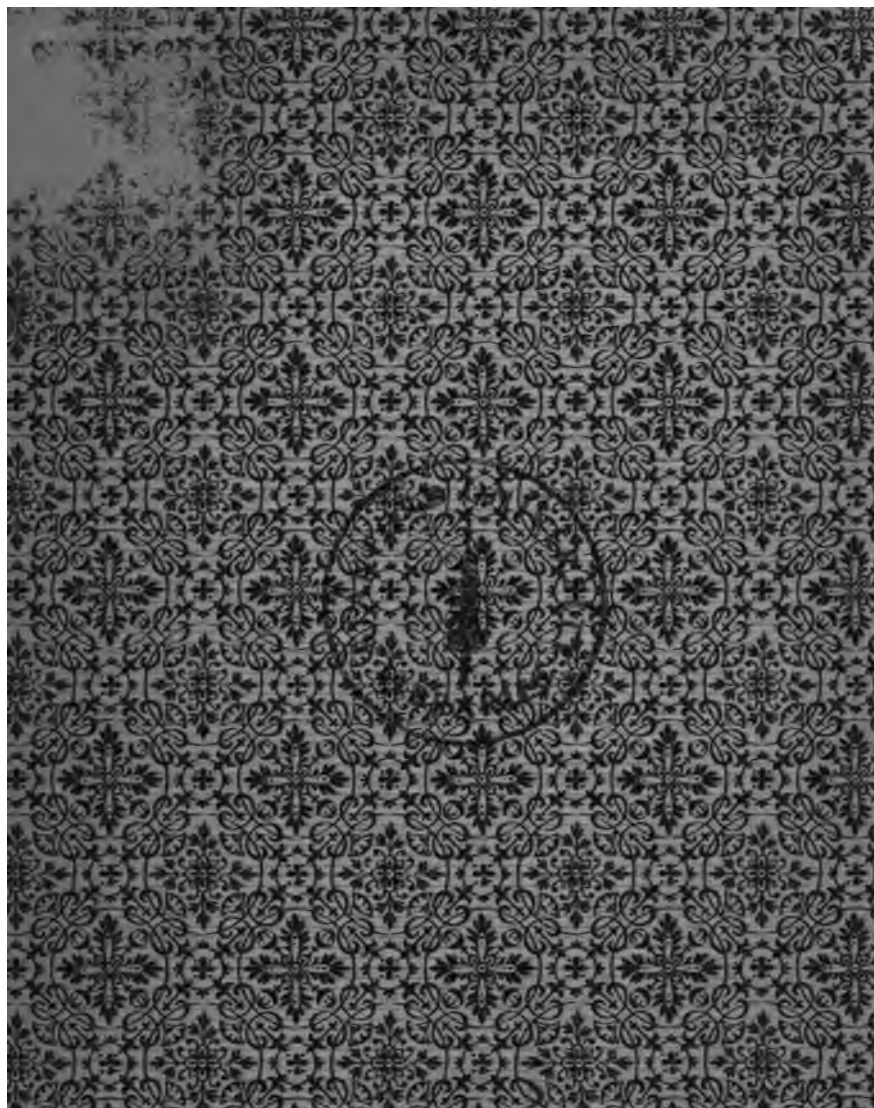
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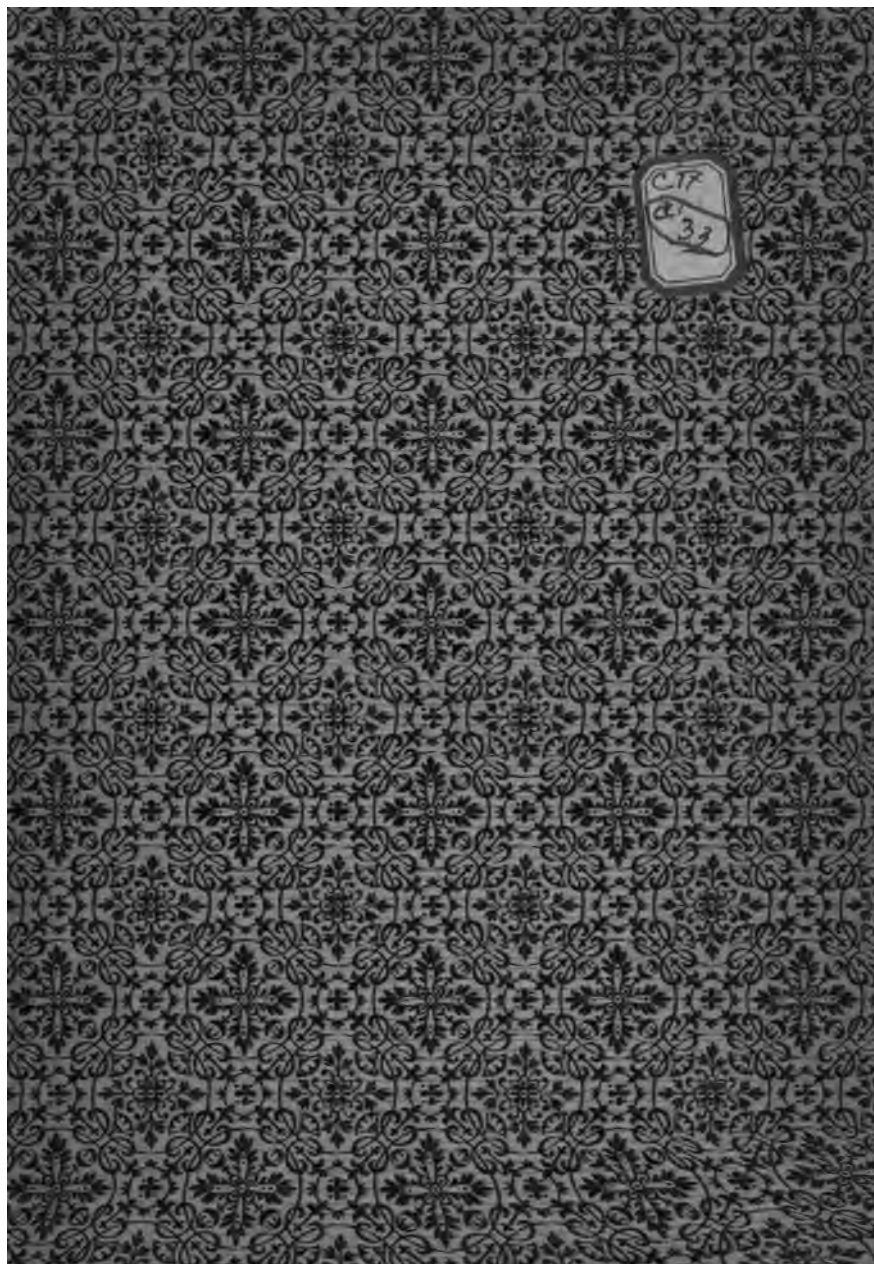
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TOLD AT TUESDAY

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TOLD AT TUXEDO

BY

A. M. EMORY

FROTH—It is an open room, and good for winter.

CLO— Why, very well, then ; I hope here be truths.

—Measure for Measure.

NEW YORK AND LONDON

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

The Knickerbocker Press

1887

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1887

Press of
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
New York

CONTENTS.

PROLOGUE	I
I.—CARMELITA CASTRO	10
II.—THE DOCTOR'S RIVAL	43
III.—IN THE SHADOW OF MONTE DIABLO	65
IV.—A POINT OF LAW	96
V.—IN SOLITUDE	113
EPILOGUE	142

TOLD AT TUXEDO.

PROLOGUE.

THERE is no doubt that the appearance of a blinding, unappeasable storm, when the general temper is disposed to out-door sports, is annoying, especially when every facility for enjoying these sports is at hand in alluring readiness. But storms, like fate, like death, like landlords, take no cognizance of individual tastes and intentions, even when the individuals are of the importance characterizing the gay company assembled in the very prettiest club-house that ever hid itself in the woods, like a patrician beauty coyly deserting the brilliant town to draw all true lovers after her into her sylvan retreat.

Yet surely the unkindly elements without might have been forgiven for the imprisonment they enforced on all but a few of the most adventurous spirits, for who but these singled favorites of fortune could have found this luxu-

rious captivity irksome? Ah, fellow scribblers! have not we, *nous autres*, been also in Arcadia and learned the exquisite pain of the crumpled rose-leaf?

The long, gay evening wore away, fainter grew the

“Flashing of jewels and flutter of laces,
Tropical odors sweeter than musk.

The curtain of silvery azure had long since hidden the bright and gallant forms that had moved through the spirited scenes of the gay little comedy on the stage in the ball-room. The wild waltz music, sadder in its sweetness than any song, had sobbed itself into quiet. The circling chairs were no longer freighted with the stately figures of lace-wrapped dowagers, and the tripping feet no longer advanced and retreated on the shining round of the floor. One attendant, looking like a gigantic May-fly in the green and gold livery of the club, flitted alone across the deserted expanse of the splendid, silent room, with a sheet of music dropped by a departed player, and only the echo of his footsteps remained.

Outside on the piazza the lanterns burned low, and a faint mist gathered on the glass that shut out the white winter world. The festoons of Christmas green trembled no longer to the

tread of pacing couples, or hung above young heads in suggestion of the garland—God send it too be ever green!—that might one day bind young lives entangled amid the routs of this pretty play-house. Glancing through the inner windows one might have seen fair faces looking back with parting smiles from the wide stair-cases, while soft voices gently bade a last good-night. These too soon were sounded in deeper tones, and out of all the brilliant household but six watchers remained by the Yule-tide blaze on the wide hearth in the great hall.

Merrily the fire-light danced, throwing rosy reflections on the polished oaken floor, sending flickering shafts of flame to play hide-and-seek among the rafters of Georgia pine, as though the imprisoned wood spirits, set free from the burning logs on the brass andirons, flew up to search in condolence for sister sprites from Southern forests, bound forever into the timbered ceiling to look down on the passing pageant below.

The silent group by the hearth gazed with concerted pensiveness into the deep red embers. No silk-swathed figure of gentle maid or stately dame broke the masculine sobriety of attire. Now and then from "lips of bearded bloom" fell brief references to triumphs on the turf, to

dark days on the fearsome street, to fair women and nights of revel perhaps, then again came silence.

At last the youngest of the circle rose and walked with languid impatience through the hall to the outer door. He came back with a lounge of dismal acquiescence, and turned the periodicals on the long table over with an idle, petulant hand.

"How 's the weather, Harry?" asked a handsome man of forty, with the more generous inflection of one moved to contribute something to the general fund of conversation, now much reduced, rather than the tone of one who seeks for information.

"Beastly!" answered Harry, sadly. After a few moments passed in silent reflection, he added: "And it's going to be worse to-morrow. There's not the first chance that it will let up."

"It's a confounded shame," said the questioner, relapsing into quietude again. A slumberous calm descended upon the group, and though no one moved or spoke or sighed with gratification, there was evident relief that the brief interruption to their aimless repose was at an end.

But so, speedily, was their satisfaction. Har-

ry's wrongs rankled in his young soul. It was not so many years since he, watched with terror by his anxious nurse, had flung himself head-long upon a painted sled and departed on his mad career down a snow-covered hill on the grounds of his father's country place. The chief charm of that rapturous ride had not been in the wild exultation with which he felt "White Ranger" dart away on the true little runners, nor yet the final sweep, sometimes ending in a delicious, delirious tumble into a contiguous snowbank, but in the blue eyes of a neighboring infant, of the softer sex, who stood by in the care of her less harassed attendant, and clapped her tiny hands with terrified delight as the small hero flashed by. Harry had secretly plied her with gum-drops in those early days, and vainly endeavored to persuade her to share his perilous glory. And then the years, the cruel, dividing years—not many of them, though,—had come between and borne her off to Europe and Harry to Harvard, and—it was all very soft, he knew, and the fellows would never believe it of him, but he had seen no one since in the gay world or out of it who had kept such baby roses in soft cheeks, or shaded them with such marvellous long lashes. And now she was at Tuxedo, a little braver,

very much taller, and a thousand times prettier. And no trunk had been carried into the clubhouse containing such a fetching toboggan suit as the one which her maid had proudly exhibited to his sister's maid. And who but Harry should guide the glorified toboggan that should bear that precious freight down the long slide? But her throat was delicate—Harry thought a good deal about that delicate throat in odd moments,—and if it stormed to-morrow she would not be permitted to venture out of doors. Poor Harry!

He looked at the pictures in *Life*; he read extracts from *Vanity Fair*, and the *Court Journal*,—pray what was that august publication doing among the wooded hills of New York?—he surreptitiously tore slips from the file of the *Scientific American*, and rolled them into admirable lamp-lighters, and at last broke forth again:

“Oh, I say! Did any of you ever see such an infernal night as this?”

No one seemed to regard this in the light of a question, but rather as a piece of justifiably dramatic rebellion against fate, and all were rather surprised when a voice said in a very grave and quiet tone, “Yes, my boy, I’ve seen a worse night.”

There was a general turning of heads in the direction of the speaker, who did not move his own, but sat gazing at the smouldering, winking logs. He was a grave man, with an abundance of fire in the dark eyes, and a sturdiness in the quiet figure, that showed that the snow on his thick hair and mustache must have fallen fast and heavily in a few seasons. He was attired with the elegant nicety that characterized each loungee there, and the hint of something bluff and weather-beaten beneath the fastidiously correct appearance gave him an odd distinction. Something in the fine melancholy of his tone entered into the mood of all who heard, changing it as a sudden change in the light will alter the whole aspect of a landscape.

"When was that, Mr. Lenox?" asked Harry, with respectful earnestness.

Mr. Lenox made no answer for a little while, and his thoughtful eyes, soft with revery, dwelt on the dull blaze on the hearth. The others sat waiting in mute surprise, until at last, slowly, as if in meditative address to his own memory rather than to the listening group, he spoke:

"It was in California, four and twenty years ago, a night so wild, so wet, so pierced by cruel winds—" he stopped suddenly—"I don't like to remember that wind," he said.

"I should hardly have thought that any storm would have made any impression on you, much less have lived in your memory for a quarter of a century," said one listener, with a good-humored glance at the powerful figure.

"You do not suppose I am cherishing a personal resentment against that one of all the storms I have weathered," said Mr. Lenox, with a half smile. But the smile faded quickly. "Ah," he said in a low voice, "the wind that night was driving the rain against the poor ruin of a face that was once the fairest my eyes ever looked on."

Van Corlear was one of the group. Now Van lives on the surface, and keeps there with determination, but he has sometimes an uncomfortable consciousness of depths below that are waiting, and waiting for him perhaps. Something in the words suggested those hidden deeps, and made him uneasy.

"Ah," he said, with airy deference, "have you a love-story for us, Mr. Lenox? We all know the charm in those based on personal experience."

"No, sir," said Mr. Lenox, briefly. "If I had ever loved that face, do you think I should speak of it here and now? And the story I have to tell is not a love-story."

"Let us have it, by all means, Mr. Lenox," said a gentleman with a figure that suggested the silken robe of justice even in evening dress. "That qualification will be a recommendation to those of us who are older than Van Corlear and Harry here."

So, while the wind whistled and the snow beat upon the panes without, he told them the story of Carmelita Castro.

I.

CARMELITA CASTRO.

IN the year eighteen fifty-four the social and business circles of San Francisco were invaded by a tall, blonde Englishman, by name Stanley Wade, handsome, fluent, with a heartiness of manner that atoned for his superior refinement and the real elegance and grace of his pretty wife, as fair and nearly as tall as he. He brought letters of introduction from prominent persons in London and New York to the leading merchants of the new city, which stated him to be eminently competent and trustworthy, and were of immediate use in securing for him a most desirable place in the office of Robert Stirling. You all know about Stirling, the forty-niner. The strain of Scotch shrewdness in his Yankee blood was a rare thing among Californians, and his success was largely due to that touch of caution in his enterprise. Yet for all that he was no cool-headed, canny Scot, but had plenty of good red blood in his veins, and could be rash enough on occasions. He had

the true American lavish instinct besides. He had done a great deal for San Francisco; had built great blocks of shops and warehouses, had laid out a beautiful park at the south end, and at the time of which I speak, was much occupied in the construction of an enormous building to be used as a sugar refinery. He had long felt the need of some one to fill the position of confidential secretary, on whose convenient shoulders he could lay a portion of his cares, who could be safely trusted to act for him in his occasional absences. Well, he was prone to sudden likings, and Wade elicited one of the most pronounced of these. It was not long before he gained the complete confidence of his employer, and was entrusted with nearly all the financial portion of his vast undertakings.

The Wades were admitted into such society as the city afforded at that time, and soon made a position for themselves which was of a very solid character. They were regular attendants, as becoming good church people, at the services of the Episcopal Chapel, were teachers in the Sunday-School, and associated with all works of charity and religion. If a missionary came from the islands of the Pacific to tell his experiences and solicit subscriptions, it was Wade who introduced him to those whose beneficent instincts

were best ascertained, who entertained him at his house, and finally bade him God-speed on his return with a well-filled purse. If a fire devoured the little all of any poor family, or accident disabled the head of it, it was Wade who started the subscription for their relief, and was quick with personal aid and benevolent sympathy. His wife, a fair, gentle creature, who adored him, followed in his wake with loving assistance, and in all the flourishing town their names were quoted as synonyms for charity, rectitude, and conjugal devotion.

They were at the height of the top wave of popular esteem when Robert Stirling suddenly decided to go East. Although in the prime of life he was beginning to feel the strain of the intense absorption of his business career for the past few years. His physicians had long warned him that rest and change of scene were urgently required if he hoped to have the health necessary to carry out the hundred schemes in his teeming brain. Like most eminently successful men, he had a core of real simplicity in his nature, and he had often longed in the most exciting moments of his astonishing career to visit the old home on which his tired eyes had not rested for twenty years; and this pull upon the heartstrings almost more than the constant

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reminders from his overworked brain made him long for a respite from the toil that had brought such splendid results. But he could never bring himself to believe that he could be spared from his place.

"If the boys were old enough to act for me!" he sighed to his wife.

But he began to be reconciled to the inconvenient youth of his sons after Wade had been with him a short time, and his decision to leave all in the hands of this acquired treasure was reached with surprising rapidity. Stirling made arrangements for a year's absence, for he meant to rest, as he had worked, thoroughly. His wife and children should see Europe with him, and spend some weeks in the Eastern cities, but the greater part of the time should be passed in the farmhouse, where his own little lads could be shown their father's haunts; should roam the fields, and follow the stream, and climb the trees in the old orchard where the successful merchant had once wandered, a dreaming boy, with a thousand thoughts and projects under the curls that crept through his torn straw hat.

Well, I think that year paid Stirling pretty well for the nights he had lain hard and the days he had gone hungry, and the more pros-

perous yet more painful years when the little wife by his side wore gowns turned for the third time, and took sole charge of three very active babies. He had no anxieties with regard to the business, for each mail brought most satisfactory reports from Wade, and assurance that he might prolong his absence far beyond the original limit if he so desired. But that he did not. The very definiteness of the number of the golden hours left him held part of their charm, which would have been spoiled by an arbitrary extension, and on the very day set for his return he started for San Francisco, notifying Wade of his intention.

Two days before the steamer was due, the city was thrown into a fever of amaze by this item appearing in the evening paper :

"We are informed on good authority that Stanley Wade, secretary and agent for Robert Stirling, left the city yesterday by the clipper ship *Flying Fish*, bound for China, deserting his wife and taking with him a notorious woman of the town, and two hundred thousand dollars belonging to his employer."

The good-humored tolerance with which the Californian of those days received the intelligence of the moral obliquities of his neighbor has no place here. Wade had been the conven-

tional shining example, model man, devoted husband, Christian gentleman. Their pride in their own acuteness was humbled by this dereliction on the part of their sample citizen.

There were many speculations as to the way in which Stirling was likely to "take it," and all curiosity was set at rest on the day after his return by the brief announcement in the papers that he offered a reward of fifty thousand dollars for the arrest of Stanley Wade, with or without the money.

Local enterprise in amateur detective work received a powerful stimulus by this step on the part of the wronged employer, who kept his own counsel in wrathful, unrelenting silence, but the chances of success were very slight. There seemed no doubt that Wade was on the *Flying Fish*, already two days out at sea, and favored by the northwest winds, which had a propulsive power almost equal to steam. There were no steamers to spare for the pursuit, even had the chances been equal. The regular police, counting some of the ablest and sharpest of the class, were terribly chagrined, despite some inevitable professional admiration of the surprising shrewdness which had outwitted them with the rest of the community. They had little hope of circumventing this surprising

adroitness, but went through the usual methods, much interviewing included. Their sedulous attention to this branch of professional duty resulted in columns of reported opinion in the papers; one which caused special comment being a very indefinite interview between Detective Grant and a woman discredibly known to local fame as Carmelita Castro. I need not remind you that ladies of her antecedents found California so congenial in those days that one had need to be very exceptional to attain even this reputation. But one look at that woman explained any interest excited by her.

I think I have never seen so beautiful a creature. Her great rings of copper-colored hair shaded the blackest arched eyebrows over big, sleepy, brown eyes. Her superb figure was always held aloft with a certain easy defiance, and the fixed roses in her creamy cheeks faded or deepened for no man. Mrs. Wade had often passed that reckless magnificent shape in the streets, and shrunk with timid haughtiness from the cool, good-humored glance of the splendid eyes. Of late, had the virtuous but delicate lady but known it, there had been a gleam of comprehending pity in their bold regard.

As in the time of flood, animals, bitterly an-

tagonized by nature, may be seen clinging together in the close companionship of a common terror on a single rock, so in certain simple, terrible moments, the strong primitive emotions assert themselves at the expense of social discernment, moral difference, natural repulsion even, and men and women forget all but a common humanity.

The deserted, bewildered wife, reading with bright, fevered eyes each item in the paper that teemed with references to her husband, fastened her gaze on the report of that interview with sudden conviction. What was Carmelita Castro to her now? Only a person through whom tidings of her missing husband might come. It was not long before her shrinking figure was stealing along the streets, in the late twilight, to the door of a house where the very knocker seemed to shudder away from her spotless hand.

How she asked for the woman, how she was answered, Mrs. Wade never knew. It seemed as if hours had gone by before she was ushered into a room where sat the one she sought. Carmelita was bending over a desk, pen in hand, her loose white wrapper falling away from her beautiful throat, against which lay the heavy hair in dense, waving masses. She turned care-

lessly as her visitor entered. Mrs. Wade unfastened her veil with trembling fingers. The indolent, bold curiosity in the dark eyes changed suddenly.

"What brings you here?" asked Carmelita, abruptly.

The shaking hands held out with a piteous, mutely imploring gesture, a paper, one white finger pointing to the printed interview between Grant and Carmelita Castro.

"Well?" demanded the latter.

"Oh, you can help me, I know you can! There was nothing in these words to make me feel this, and yet I do. Oh, have pity on me! We love our husbands, we Englishwomen."

"I am an Englishwoman," said Carmelita, slowly, "and I had a husband once; a Mexican. He was a devil."

"Mine is not!" cried the other woman, passionately. "Wicked? Yes, he has been wicked, but once, only this once. We have lived together for eleven years, and he has never given me one hard word. He has never until now wronged one human being of a penny, or deceived man, woman, or child who trusted him. This is a delirium. He will wake and then he will want me. He will want me," she repeated piteously.

"Do you think he is with me?" asked Carmelita.

The wife looked steadily in the wonderful face.

"No!" she said, after a short, strong scrutiny.

"They say he is on his way to China."

"Not yet. He is not gone so far out of my reach."

"He has left you some clue, then?"

With what a wail came the answer.

"Not one word!"

Carmelita was a shrewd woman. She believed her implicitly.

"Why do you believe I can help you?" she asked.

"I have told you that I do not know."

Carmelita threw herself back in her chair again. Then she folded her beautiful arms on the desk and rested her chin on them, looking up with keen eyes at the pallid face that watched her.

"Mrs. Stanley Wade," she said, "if I had come to your house in South Park and told you that I sought your aid in recovering a lost lover, what would you have done, a month ago?"

The honest Saxon color burned up into the wan countenance.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Wade, steadily, "that

I should have ordered my servants to turn you away from my door."

Carmelita nodded approvingly.

"You speak the truth," she said, "so do I. We have that much in common: nothing else, except our English birth. You don't mind my claiming it?"

"No."

"Perhaps I might go farther, and say we've both been ill-treated."

She saw an angry light invade Mrs. Wade's mild eyes, and stopped.

"You've come to me fairly enough," she said, after a pause, "and I'll answer you fairly. I don't know where your husband is."

The look of bitter disappointment with which her words were met was quickly chased away by one of persistent hope.

"But you could find out!"

Carmelita was silent.

"You have suspicions," urged the wronged wife, her face imploring like that of a suffering child.

"Yes," said Carmelita, curiously shaken.

Mrs. Wade came close to the white figure and caught one of the large, dimpled hands in her own slight ones with a gesture of passionate entreaty.

"Oh, listen to me! I do not know what your life has been. It must have been cruel, or you would not be here. But once you were a girl, as I was when Stanley Wade came to me. You heard, as I did, words of love, and you believed them. You believed them so surely," she repeated, watching closely the face of that other woman, "that when you found they came from a false and cruel heart there was nothing in the world for you but—this! I went to my mother in that early time, and told her what he had said to me. Was there no one to whom you told your love-story?"

"Yes," said Carmelita, in a low voice, "there was a saint on earth then whose name you must not mention here."

"Then there is an angel in heaven now. She would be sorry for us if she knew, two poor girls remembering their happier time——"

"Stop!" said Carmelita, imperatively. "This is no place for such words, no place for you. Go home. If I can help you I will. Let that comfort you. I told you I speak the truth."

When Mrs. Wade wearily stepped within the door of her lonely house, Carmelita Castro was already dashing far beyond the outskirts of the city on a horse that she knew and loved. On and on she rode through the night, her pis-

tols at her belt, her luminous eyes narrowed to the veriest gleam of brown as she peered into the darkness, her full voice never ceasing in its encouragement to the trusty friend who carried her with fleet safety. The dawn was beginning to redden the eastern sky when at last she drew rein before a long, low house that was little more than a fantastic ruin. She had long since abandoned the highway, and the road which brought her to this hidden door was scarcely more than a just perceptible bridle-path. Slipping from her saddle, Carmelita struck the handle of her whip sharply against the casement of one of the low windows. All was silent, and she repeated the blow with such energy that the weary, sagacious horse started at the noise of it. This time there was a stir within, and Carmelita listened with alert attention, not devoid of a certain grim amusement, to the muffled sounds of hurry and agitation. They lasted longer than she liked, but as her impatience approached a climax, a violent fit of coughing came to shake her into an exhaustion that gave the effect of placid waiting, for, as the door was cautiously approached from within, she called out gently :

“ Well, Kate ! ”

“ Carmelita ! ”

“ Just so.”

The unseen Kate swore a little, then, with nervous, hurrying fingers, opened the door far enough for Carmelita to enter, closing it sharply upon her, almost before the last fold of her gown had fluttered in. A fire still smouldered and winked on the hearth of the large, low room they entered, sending out light enough to show that Kate was a very handsome Kate indeed, gorgeous as a tropical flower in her heavy, rich, dark beauty, coarse too, as its leaves.

In the name of a most ineligible locality, this lady demanded of her untimely guest the cause of this late—or early call. She was apparently at once apprehensive and relieved, despite the sleepy swagger of her manner, and withal, not unkindly disposed toward the intruder.

“Where is your brother?” asked Carmelita, abruptly.

The crimson in Kate’s cheeks flamed into scarlet as she answered with a cool laugh:

“You aint come after him, I suppose; I never thought you was sweet on each other.”

“I am come after him,” said Carmelita, doggedly. “You ’d better call him.”

“S’posin’ he aint home?”

“Who were you talking with after my knock wakened you?” demanded Carmelita.

“We do entertain a friend occasional,” said

Kate, pushing her bare foot furtively at an escaped brand, still dully warm from the burning.

"I want to see your brother," insisted Carmelita. "You have n't a houseful to-night."

"Better wait until morning."

"I have n't time."

"Well, whatever you want of Dick, you 've come at a bad time. He came home from Zuchiro two hours ago, and was pretty full. I don't care about wakin' him when he 's like that."

"Then I will," said Carmelita, moving toward a door in the corner.

Kate's quick motion toward that door was as quickly arrested, but Carmelita caught it.

"Come, Kate," she said, quietly. "You know and I know that Stanley Wade is in there. I 've got to see him."

"Stanley Wade! He 's on his way to China. Dick is here," said Kate, boldly.

"Let me see him," said Carmelita, for answer.

Kate hesitated for a moment, then, going forward, flung open the door.

"Look for yourself, you loon," she said. "He 's gone to sleep again, I suppose."

Carmelita looked at the recumbent figure

nearly hidden by the bedclothes. Only the outline of an olive cheek and a mass of dark hair could be seen. She gazed steadily for a few moments, then advanced into the room.

"There's no use playing possum," she said, going up to the side of the couch. "I've something to tell you, Mr. Wade." Still there was no movement, and Carmelita coolly drew from her belt one of the little silver-mounted pistols. She cocked it with a resonant, business-like click.

"Now, Wade," she said, "I'll call in this persuader. If you don't speak, I'll wing you. I've come as your friend, but not as your friend alone, and this is a pretty desperate matter."

At the sound of that click the eyes of the man started open. They closed instantly, but Carmelita caught the gleam of bright blue that flashed out oddly enough from the tawny setting of his dark face.

"I thought so," she said, composedly, "though I was n't sure until now. You need n't speak. I've something to tell you. Go away, Kate."

Kate stood within the door, and now burst into an oration quite distinguished by its strained, jocose profanity. Carmelita paid no attention to her.

"I don't think I ever saw walnut juice and Tarol's dye work better," she said, still addressing the man. "You always had Dick Drener's features, and you've matched his colors so well, except in the eyes, that your own mother would n't know the difference—when you're asleep—unless she knew what I know."

The man sat up in bed, the sheets falling away and showing him to be fully dressed.

"Well," he said, "what is it? You are a clever woman, Carmelita Castro."

"Not so clever," said Carmelita, carelessly. "Any one who knew you and Kate as I've known you these six months, would n't be fooled into thinking you'd left her on this side of the water and gone off with Meg Merino. I suspected from the first that you had n't left the country, because I knew where Kate was. Why did n't you?"

"There were arrangements——," muttered Wade.

"About the money you stole? I suppose so. Dick Drener has part of it with him, and you and Kate mean to take off the rest of it and yourselves when it comes handy and the coast is clear.

"See here, Carmelita," interposed Kate, who had passed from amaze, alarm, and rage into de-

fiance, "what the——is it all to you any way. If you 're after some of the cash, say so. It aint like you to spring a thing on us in this way."

"You leave the room" said Carmelita; "it will be better for you. Going to be ugly about it, are you? I would n't. Do you remember the time when you were down with small-pox, and not a soul in the camp would come near you but one woman, and how she risked her life to save yours, and what you value more, your skin, for you? You made a big promise then, Kate; keep it now, and give me half an hour with this man."

The girl turned sullenly away. "Are you going to get us into trouble?" she asked, with a lowering brow.

"No, I 'm going to get you out of it, and more besides. Go, there 's no time to lose."

Slowly, and with many a muttered, protesting oath, Kate passed into the outer room; Carmelita promptly closed the door upon her, and looked Wade in the face.

"You 're a fine specimen of a fool," she said, with a touch of indulgent cynicism.

"Was that what you came to say?"

"Do you think she 's worth it?" asked Carmelita, indicating the banished Kate, and ignoring the question.

"She's the handsomest thing alive," said the man, doggedly.

Carmelita waved her left hand at him with a gesture of immense, resigned contempt.

"Oh, but you're a hopeless lot!" she said. "Kate can't hold a candle to me, if that's what took you, nor even—but some things can't be spoken of together. Stanley Wade," and she went to his side, speaking in a clear, rapid whisper: "do you know that there's a reward of fifty thousand dollars offered for you, with or without the loot?"

Wade was white to the very lips. For one moment there was a murderous gleam in his eye as it rested on the woman's figure, only a woman's, for all its splendid vigor. It was a lonely place, and Kate was devoted to him.

Carmelita caught the cruel, fleeting suggestion.

"Ah, it won't be worth your while to add murder to the list of your new accomplishments," she said, with a light laugh. "I'm not after the reward, my fine gentleman."

"What then?" demanded the man, staring.

"Sit down and I'll tell you," said Carmelita.

It was soon told. Wade sat quite still, with his head bowed on his hands. Carmelita made

no comment on her simple narrative. "Now I'll fix Kate," she concluded.

"Wait!" said Wade, hoarsely. "I don't know—I——"

She flashed around on him a look before which he cowered.

"You!" she cried, in a tone that smote the air as if it had been thunder evoked by the lightning of that blinding glance. "By the Lord, I think I could serve that sweet woman best by giving you up!"

Again came that evil look into the man's face.

"Better not," said Carmelita. "I thought I might have some little difficulty with you, and I left a letter for the Madam. The fifty thousand would n't come amiss to her, and she'll read that letter, if I'm not there by the time I set."

Wade rose. "Do you think——"

"I think you are going to accept my plan. I don't pretend to say you are worth saving, but *she* thinks you are, and I suppose things the world over are nothing but what people think they are." With this hint at the deepest secret of an advanced philosophy, Carmelita turned away.

"Shall you tell Kate about the reward?" whispered Wade.

She gave him one glance of good-humored scorn. "Tell her!" she said; "What do you take me for? Do you think she loves you fifty thousand dollars worth? No, Stanley Wade. There 's only one woman in the world fool—or angel—enough to do that."

Three days after, a man, in obedience to a surly word of command from the captain of the clipper ship *Astra*, permitted himself to be aided first by that official, whose manner throughout was one of protesting compliance, up the side of that noble vessel.

Two women stood below in a little boat that danced and rocked restlessly on the uneasy waves. Both were silent, and one held against her heart the hands of the other.

"Mary!" called a voice from above, and both started.

"That is your name," said the larger, taller, woman. "It was mine once too, the English name my mother gave me. Will you think of me sometimes as Mary?"

The stainless lips were pressed against the full, crimson mouth that quivered at their touch. "I will pray for you always as Mary," was the answer.

"Mary!" came the call again, and, with a last look of love and gratitude, Mary Wade turned away.

Far out at sea that night a man and a woman paced the narrow deck of the flying ship.

"And she pleaded with him, this captain, who loved her once, loves her now, I think," said the fair-haired, gentle Mary. "And she has done all this for me, a stranger, because I asked her. Is it not wonderful?"

And the man answered with hanging head, "Nothing is wonderful when you can forgive."

Seven years were not long in passing to those who felt each moment a retrieval. The wife of Stanley Wade had spoken with the divine discernment of love. That dark episode in his life had been a delirium, a fever, a soon tamed riot of hitherto well-disciplined senses. No one sudden crime can corrupt a whole soul. As violent as had been his sin, was his repentance. Eighty thousand dollars of Stirling's money had been restored to him as soon as it could be safely placed in his hands. To extort a portion of Dick Drener's claimed share of the spoil was hard, but it was done. From this Wade reserved a few thousands due him for his services. The rest had gone in speculation.

An old friend to whom he went in Hong Kong with the sorrowful tale of his aberration, received him, with many restrictions and stipulations, into his counting-house. There he

slaved, early and late, night and day, to save from his salary until the sum still due his wronged employer should be complete. This would have taken a lifetime and more, had not the money reserved on his old account been invested—a little against Mrs. Wade's cautious instinct, it must be owned—in a speculation that brought riches with a rapidity that seemed miraculous. When seven years were gone Wade had paid Robert Stirling every farthing of which he had robbed him, and was in a fair way to make a decent competence for himself. Then said Mary Wade to her husband, looking into the blue eyes of the woman-child born to them in their exile: "We must go back, now, for Carmelita. My letters are of no avail. We will take the child and show her to her, and tell her she bears her name, and she will not refuse longer to come to us."

It was on a night in January that I, long absent from California, was asking myself why I had never remembered with sufficient vindictiveness the amenities of its climate. I fought my way along the deserted streets in the teeth of the gale, my face stung by the bitter rain that drove against it like an army of red-hot needles, my hands muffled in my cloak, and my feet protected by heavy boots, clogged with

dampness, my every fibre a protest against the outrageous behavior of the elements. As I turned a corner with a desperate, concentrated resistance to the wind that tore savagely around it, a slight figure fluttered against me, like a leaf blown upon my breast by the cruel gale, and fell prone at my feet. I picked it up, supporting it as well as I could, until breath and the power to speak should come. But after a moment's struggle, a wild fit of coughing racked and shook the gaunt frame into insensibility, and I saw that there was nothing for me to do but carry it to the nearest shelter. I thought it would be difficult, but as I raised the sick creature in my arms I found it so light a burden that it would have been no task to have borne it on with me for a mile. It was but a short distance that I had to go before the shelter appeared in the form of a saloon, sending out a warm red light into the winter night. As we approached the door I lifted my hand and put away from the poor face the torn, weedy draperies that had fallen over it. The rain had beaten hard upon it, and the long straying locks were wet and dripping. The glow from the saloon windows fell strong upon it, and then, for all its pinched outlines, its fallen contours, for all the cruel scar across it,

showing clear in that rosy light, then, gentlemen, I knew her.

I got her into the place and an inner room, and the wife of the proprietor helped me to bring back the ebbing life to the wrecked frame. At last the lovely dark eyes—lovely still, sole vestige of that ruined beauty—looked at me with intelligence and recognition.

"Oh," she said, "it is you, John Lenox."

"I can hardly dare say it is you, Carmelita Castro," I answered, sadly. "Why do I find you like this?"

She gave the ghost of a smile. "It's not like our last meeting, is it?"

I remembered the night when I had last seen her in the full plenitude of her beauty and power, and could only turn my face away.

"It was at that dinner at the Alcazar restaurant, where Ricardo Mores brought you," she said, meditatively. "What a shy fellow you were, and how you hated meeting me, though you had told Ricardo over and over again that you longed to be a painter just to make my face live forever on canvas. You wouldn't care to do that now, would you?" she asked, with that same unearthly smile. "Do you remember," she went on, "that it was just after the Wade affair had set the city mad, and that

you and every one suspected me of knowing more about it than anybody else, and how you and Howard urged me to tell you something about it, and tried to trap me when you failed?"

"Yes," I said. She had grown deadly white as she spoke, and I made her drink some brandy.

"Kind, always kind," she said. "There were some words spoken that night, John Lenox, which even I should not have heard from the lips of men. Do you remember how you turned on Howard and told him that a man who forgot the sex of any woman was unworthy of his own? There was danger of a fight for a while, but he was always very fond of you afterward."

"Yes," I said again. "He 's underground now, poor Howard."

"And I above it!" she said, in a tone that seemed to reproach the dead man for that sad advantage. "But not for long."

"Tell me," I entreated, "why you are abroad on this fearful night."

Something of the old careless shrug was in the lifting of her wasted shoulders.

"Hobson's choice," she said.

"I 've been turned out of my lodgings. I 've

owed rent for months, and I have n't a cent in the world."

"What fiend could have turned you out on such a night."

"Oh," she said, "the woman is no fiend. She did well in letting me into her house at all; and she has been out of her money for a long time."

"Let me take you where you can be made comfortable," I said, eagerly.

"What 's the use?"

"Use!" I echoed. "Is there no use in preserving your life?"

"Not the slightest, and you could n't do it if there was, my friend. It won't pay to prolong it."

"Let me be the judge," I said, gently.

She turned away irritably. "Oh, I wish I had not met you! The storm would have been a better friend, though you mean well. I should have been as comfortable as Howard is if I had stayed out all night."

But I persisted and urged, and the poor thing, weakened by long sickness, yielded easily enough, only declaring that if I were willing to help her, she would go back to the lodgings from which she had been ejected. "It 's all the home I 've had for so long," she said.

The woman who kept the place was sufficiently civil when I came, bringing Carmelita, and stating that henceforth I would be responsible for her.

Well, with the best medical care, and all that money could do to make her comfortable, she seemed to rally. One day when I visited her sick-room, she looked at me with something of the old, gay, delicious smile.

"You 're not a newspaper man any more?" she said.

"No," I answered.

"Then I 'll tell you what you were so wild to know seven years ago. I can't do any thing else."

So she told me the true story of her rescue of Stanley Wade for the sake of his wife.

"You see," she concluded, lightly, turning off so the force of the narrative which her dramatic instinct had shown in all its power, much as she slurred her own part in it, "I felt it coming on then, this consumption; it 's been in my family for years, and I did n't know then whether it would be the hasty kind, or slow, as it has proved, and I thought I might as well do a decent thing before I died."

"Did you not know of what that fifty thousand dollars' reward might do for you with

your failing health and your hopeless future?" I asked, after a while.

"Oh, yes," she said. "Women of my sort always do think of what money can do. But she wanted that man more than I wanted the money. Do you know that she has written me constantly during these seven years, and begged me to come to her. Do you understand, begged me to come to her, to her home where her little child, a girl, is growing up?"

"And you never thought of going?"

"What do you take me for?" with the old toss of the head. "No!"

"But this scar, Carmelita?" I said, after a long silence.

"Oh, that is my husband's legacy."

"Juan Castro was your husband?"

"Yes. Did you know I was an English girl? I was a farmer's daughter, living near Oxford, when Castro was at the University. He fell in love with my looks, and I—I adored him. We ran away together, but we were married first. We came to America. When we had been in the country some time, he grew tired of me, and then he told me that we were not really married, since he was Catholic and I Protestant. I was a girl. I did not know. I was mad and wild. I could have killed him. I did not know

what to do with myself. I went away with his best friend. They fought about me. I came to hate that other man—I think I always hated him—and then——” She turned her face to the wall. “You know what then.”

“You had not this scar when I knew you,” I said, when she had lain so for a long time.

“No. I’ve had it for five years only. Castro met me one day. I was looking ill even then. He looked almost worse. He had gone through his little fortune, had been confidence man, bar-keeper, heaven knows what, though his people were among the best in Mexico. He was broken down and very poor. He had come to get money of me—of *me*. He had heard in some vague way of the Wade affair. When he learned about the fifty thousand dollars he was beside himself with rage. He kept it down at first, though, and demanded that I should write to Wade for money. He did not understand when I refused. I suppose he thought he would frighten me. He had often been cruel to me when we were together, even while he still said he loved me. When he found I was not to be moved he was frantic, and at last he dashed at me with his knife. When he saw the blood—there was a good deal of it—he was frightened, and ran away. He thought he had killed me.

He was drowned in Yelva creek two weeks after that. This is his last gift—all that he left me," she said, drawing her thin finger across the scar.

When I next visited her she had failed visibly. She could scarcely speak, but she drew from her poor bosom a little packet of letters.

"If you—ever—see her—give them—back—to her—with my love."

I took them. They were signed: "From Mary to Mary."

This was in the morning. I could not stay, for an urgent business matter claimed me, but I promised to return in the evening. At sundown I was hastily summoned. When I entered the room, flooded as it was with the sunset glow, I started back in positive terror. Carmelita was propped up in the bed, her eyes shining like stars, her glorious hair spread over the pillow in thin billows of deep gold, two scarlet roses burning in her cheeks, overflowing and hiding that cruel scar.

She bowed to me as I entered.

"Welcome," she said. "Any friend of Señor Mores——"

I went forward and took her hand.

"Don't you know me, Carmelita?" I said.

"Not yet," she answered, with an archly radiant smile. "But we shall be friends I am

sure. Ah, thanks!" She held out her hand and took in it an imaginary wine-glass. She held this phantom cup to her lips as though draining it; then, with a gesture of indescribable grace and audacity, threw it over her shoulder.

As she did so the marvellous color faded suddenly. The whole expression of her face altered, and the hand I seized grew very cold.

"Carmelita!" I said.

She looked at me with a glance of gentle correction.

"Mary," she said, "my name is Mary."

"Yes," I said. "I forgot."

She struggled a little for breath, and I raised her on the pillow. She turned her head to my shoulder with a little sigh, and a thin stream of bright red blood sprang from her chilling lips.

I staunched it as best I could and watched the lids flutter down over the beautiful eyes that had looked on so much evil. Suddenly they were lifted, and she looked at me with a long, curious, innocent gaze, like that of a waking babe.

"Mary!" I said.

"Ah! she said, with a smile of unspeakable content, "Mary always, now."

As I laid her down, a knock sounded at the door, and while I yet held my quiet burden

three people entered. Stanley and Mary Wade and their child stood, too late by the moment that separates time from eternity, looking down on the worn and radiant face.

It needed but a few words, spoken with sacred quietude in that still presence to tell it all. Then the mother lifted her child, and the flower-like face pressed with the holy fearlessness of infancy the brow of the dead woman.

Mourning bitterly they sailed away to their Eastern home, but not until the baby hands had planted on a nameless grave in the soil of the Pacific slope, and twined about a shining cross, a trailing wreath of English ivy.

II.

THE wild cry of the wind had softened to a continuous sobbing sigh when Mr. Lenox finished speaking, and for a while nothing else was heard in the silent hall. At last the Judge said very tremulously and simply :

“ Thank you.”

The others did not speak at all. Harry had turned his back on the rest and was fluttering the leaves of the magazines with an unsteady hand. Never mind what else Harry was doing. Oh, blessed time of youth, when tears are ready ! How sadly, in later years, we turn our dry eyes back to those foolish, soft-hearted days !

Van Corlear was rather pale. He walked restlessly about the room for a while, then spoke abruptly :

“ Who will speak next ? ”

“ I don't think the occasion demands any thing further,” said one man, very gravely.

“ Oh, yes, it does ! We can make a modern Decamerone of this episode, though the plague

—in the form of the snow-storm—arrived after we got here.”

“A Decamerone? Six of us! said one of the group, derisively.

“We ’ll make up the other four to-morrow.

“What we have heard has hardly been in Decameronic vein,” said the Judge, soberly.

“Hardly. I ’ll tell a tale decidedly in that vein if you ’ll listen,” said Van Corlear, with determination.

“I ’ll hear it another time, Van Corlear,” said Mr. Lenox, very kindly. He pushed back his chair and moved away.

“Let him go,” said Van Corlear, looking rather resentfully after his retreating figure. “If he thinks we are going to carry off that story of his to dream over, he ’s decidedly mistaken. If he can do it, let him. I frankly own that I don’t dare.”

But Mr. Lenox was coming back again.

“I ’ll hear your story, Van,” he said. “Life leads us from phase to phase in just such a fashion.”

“My tale is of an old fellow I knew once,” said Van Corlear, “and true as yours is. He was the chief physician in the town where I was born and bred. Did you know that I was once a simple country lad?”

"We 've noticed the affecting touches of rural simplicity, that no art can disguise, Van," said the Judge, laughing.

"Nature will have her way," said Van, gravely. "Harry, you young beggar, come around here to the fire and prepare to pay homage to my talents as raconteur, while I tell you of

THE DOCTOR'S RIVAL.

The Doctor had married in haste and was repenting at leisure. Not an uncommon situation, truly, but an uncommonly disagreeable one, the Doctor, thought, considering those individualities on which he prided himself.

There were certain reasons for the existence of these distinguishing traits. The blood of sunny Gascony darted through the veins of the little physician. His mother was — well, she was a native of Gascony, and perhaps we had best touch only on this, her sole, conspicuous virtue, and not inquire closely into her career after that favorable introduction to this planet. But the Doctor's father was a most respectable man, a most excellent physician, and a most injured husband. He had unusual conjugal susceptibilities—for a Frenchman,—and bore but restively his wife's liberal interpretation of the Decalogue. So one day when she returned to

their pretty home in a suburb of Paris, after a six weeks' sojourn in the city, more than usually characterized by adventures erratic and erotic, he decided that he would speedily make arrangements to have the joy of her next return unimpaired by the presence of his small son and himself. He also, being a prudent and thrifty person, elected that it should be free from the resumption of household cares, and on her next departure sold the cottage and furnishings, arranged his affairs, and with the boy and several letters of some value as credentials, set his face towards that asylum for unsuccessful lives, the fortunate discovery of the late Christopher Columbus.

He prospered well in the new country, though with that we are not immediately concerned, and the youngster thrived on the wholesome economies of a household ever kept distinctively French in its abundant thrift. He grew to be a sharp and active lad, and, in time, naturally followed his father's profession. They worked amicably together for many years, and the son mourned when the father died, with that filial devotion which seems to be developed in the modern Gaul, at the expense of other virtues.

The house was a thought too quiet with the old man gone, and the young Doctor—young

only now in local parlance, which had been used so to distinguish him from his father—naturally turned his thoughts toward matrimony. At this juncture the extremely dissimilar characteristics inherited from his extremely dissimilar parents asserted themselves in a most perplexing and uncomfortable manner. He was highly sensible to beauty, and actively conscious of the solid attractions to be found in a rich bank account. These conflicting allurements were admirably represented in the persons of Miss Rosa Melvor and Miss Martha Tree.

“Oh,” said the Doctor to himself after much meditation, “what man of taste marries his sweetheart? To degrade an ideal into a wife, to contemplate the adored one as she applies hot mustard to the aching tooth, which surely must befall in the course of a lifetime, to be obliged to hand her gross money in filthy bills and chinking silver that she may buy with it hideous utensils to be used in her kitchen,—bah, what horror! True, that is the custom of this country, but I am a Frenchman by birth and conviction. Rosa, my heart is irrevocably thine. That less worthy gift, my hand, shall be bestowed on the respectable Martha.”

Martha accepted the hand with avidity. It

was a nice little hand, well-shaped, skilful, and by no means empty. She was three years his senior, and he was past forty, and, despite the bank account, this was her first offer. She was not handsome, though a merciful fate had decreed that she should be blissfully unconscious of this fact, and she told her friends that it was so sweet to be loved for herself alone.

Now the Doctor's American breeding, while it had familiarized him with American customs, had never impregnated him with American ideas. He had believed that, after a brief period of courteous attention to his wife, he would be permitted to devote himself to his really cherished practice, diversified by harmless sighs sacred to the thought of the relinquished Rosa. Little did this amiable child of a distant clime divine the disposition of the American wife, of which social fact, considered as a class, his Martha may be said to have possessed all the representative vices. Her assiduities appalled him ; her blandishments wearied him ; her tyrannies astounded him. She took possession of him as the American wife always takes possession of her legal lord and actual serf, and would n't in the least understand that this was not the boon he craved. In truth, Martha honestly considered herself a most indulgent

wife, whose many concessions to her husband's misfortune in being a native of other shores required explanations to her conscience and her friends.

"Oh, well!" said the poor Doctor to himself, "but one knows the destiny of husbands. But a little while, my friend, and one will supplant thee in her regard, and thou shalt perhaps own thyself once more." But even as he spoke he felt little confidence. Martha was profoundly, hopelessly, utterly faithful, with that most reliable fidelity which is—to use a vulgar simile—Hobson's choice.

"Nothing could ever tempt me to *think* of any one but the Doctor," asserted she on all occasions, and had her husband been familiar with English literature, he might have answered, in the words of the immortal Micawber: "My dear, I am not aware that any one has asked you to do so."

"These women, these women, who make a virtue of necessity!" he said, despairingly. "Why, why, did I not study the character of this person? Why, why, did I think with longing of her dollars? Sordid pig of an imbecile that I am, a million would not pay me for this slavery!"

As time went on he became yet more ab-

jectly wretched. "There is no release for me but in the grave," he mourned. "When I absent myself, she traces me. When I lock my office door, she sits outside and sings—ah, just Heaven, what sounds are those!—two ballads called 'Waiting' and 'Longing.' May he who composed them live to experience my fate! When I am cold, she is pensive; when I am dull, she is sprightly; when I am angry, she weeps. Is there no way to alienate this pervasive woman? 'Where have you been, love?' 'What do you do, dear?' 'With whom did you speak, darling?' Is it for this and for eight hundred dollars a year that I have sold my liberty?"

Flight never occurred to the Doctor. He was far too well placed in the regard of his town to wish to leave it, and the gold which he loved was surely piling itself up in the fees, which came thicker and faster each day. The Doctor never sighed now for Rosa; his one thought was to disembarrass himself of Martha.

For more than two years he endured this bondage, and might still be enduring it, had it not been for the sinful resolve of the trustees of the little Academy of Music in Minkville to present French opera to be witnessed in that hitherto undesecrated temple of art, The Doç-

tor found little enjoyment in any entertainment now, but motives of patriotism impelled him to attend the first performance. Of course, Martha went with him, and, of course, she apologized to the other members of the Presbyterian Ladies' Zenana Mission Band by the oft-repeated extenuation: "My husband being a foreigner, you know." She also felt it necessary to explain that there was little danger that they should fall "into the habit of the thing," as there were to be but six performances, after which the entire troupe were to return to France, leaving Minkville boards desolate and decent.

The tenor was a good-looking youth, with a poor voice and a fine figure. Martha was still susceptible, and she raved of this dapper hero with much propriety. The Doctor listened at first to her remarks with that listless inattention which betrays the confirmed husband, but as she prattled and rambled on, a dark thought flashed into his stupefied brain.

"Aha!" said he, "at last!" He was very attentive to Martha during the rest of the evening, but she appeared a shade less flattered than usual by the circumstance. He begged her to excuse him when they reached home, as he had to write a very important letter to his

old friend, Gaston Voisin, who had once, with himself, composed the French population of Minkville, but had long since returned to his native city of Rouen.

One evening, some weeks after this agreeable dissipation, as Martha beamed upon her Doctor with maddening amiability across the dinner table, a letter was handed her. She held it upside down, sideways, straight, slanting; she examined the illegible post-mark with great care; she commented on the foreign stamp; she wondered audibly who could have sent it; and at last, having gone through the usual feminine programme on such occasions, appeared to be suddenly impressed by the fact that it was possible to gratify her curiosity in some measure by opening it. At that moment the Doctor was summoned by an imperative ring at the office bell. Martha unfolded the thin sheet of paper and, with a gasp of amazement, read :

“ANGEL OF MY DREAMS :

“Long have I sought an ideal. I do not write well thy so cold language, but I have of it enough to say that I adore thee. That night when ‘La Fille du Tambour-Major’ was displayed at the miserable theatre in the town which has the happiness to contain thee, I, Antoine Nardin, saw

but thee. That face spirituelle ! Those charms ripe ! Those eyes of pale fire ! When I them for the first time contemplate, they demolish me.

"I have learned of thee that thou art wedded to a compatriot of mine. It is with rage that I remember him, miserable, for it was he, I know, who sat beside thee.

"One word—wilt thou send me one word ? Think of my youth and my sorrows, and suffer one drop of balm to fall upon my lacerated heart.

"To thee, always to thee,

"ANTOINE NARDIN.

"——Rue de—Paris."

Martha had read the letter at first with increasing wonder, but when she laid it down at last all surprise had ceased. Her cheeks were very red, in blotches, I grieve to say, for that was their uncomfortable custom when invaded by blushes, but she was not surprised—on reflection. Was she not beautiful ? She had always known it, and had been shocked, on æsthetic principles entirely, at the Doctor's insensibility to the fact in its fulness. Spirituelle ? Ah ! Martha looked at her lean wrists and attenuated arms. This young man was possessed of great discernment. Ripe ? Surely. What man of taste finds aught but rawness in charms that have not basked in the suns of

forty summers? Poor fellow! So he had carried her image with him over wide seas. Would it be wrong to send him one little word of comfort and admonition? Of course it was very terrible, she thought, with a thrill of complacent horror, that she, a married woman, should be addressed by any one (and an actor, too!) in words of love, however respectful, but, like her husband, he was a foreigner, you know.

She fled to her room. Now it was *her* turn to lock the door, and, with trembling hands she penned the following epistle:

“DEAR SIR:

“It is very wrong for you to address me as you have done, so wrong that I feel it my duty to tell you it must *never happen again*. I can understand how greatly you must suffer from this hopeless—sentiment. I need not say that I think your singing and acting *beautiful*, and that perhaps if we had met earlier—but it was not to be. Forget me, and I will endeavor to forget you.

“Yours very truly,

“MARTHA T. PELLETIN.”

The Doctor was able to pursue his avocations in peace during that day, and for many days after. Martha spent the greater part of

her time in contemplation of this new interest in her life. It was with difficulty that she reserved the mighty secret for her own delectation. At times her pride in the sentiments she had awakened made her resolve to tell all to her husband within an hour. Then the fear that he might be angry—and she really was rather afraid of his serious anger—made her hesitate. Besides, he might sternly forbid her to answer any further communications, and circumvent her in the event of disobedience, and Martha wished to have the moral credit of a voluntary deference to conscience. So she contented herself with darkly mysterious references to the hidden perils in the life of fascinating women when she conversed with her friends, and dwelt with augmented emphasis on her fidelity to the Doctor.

The reply to her letter arrived with flattering promptitude. This forbidden and expected document was of a more fervent character than the last. Antoine told her of the kisses he had rained on the cold, cruel words traced by her so divine hand. He sent her a photograph of himself in the most effective of his stage costumes. He wrote of charcoal and a closed room, of pistols and poison bowls, of all sorts of dreadful, delicious things.

"Never, never will I answer *that* letter!" cried Martha. Accordingly, she sat down the next Sunday and wrote a much longer and slightly warmer epistle than the last, in which she implored him for *her* sake to abandon all thoughts of the insidious charcoal-fume, the deadly pistol, and the contorting drug.

That night, with the photograph hidden in her gown, she cast many glances at the unconscious Doctor over her embroidery, for the first time with something of criticism in their regard. Well, undoubtedly he did present a dried and tanned appearance in contrast with the stalwart comeliness of the pictured figure.

"And this miserable little man dares to slight me, while that beautiful young person adores me," thought Martha, indignantly.

Letters rained upon her after this fast as leaves in autumn. Martha neglected her household duties, relaxed her pinching economies, ceased entirely to molest her husband, and wrote reams in answer. The Doctor seemed strangely oblivious of this change in the partner of his joys and sorrows; doubtless he was deeply grateful, but he said nothing.

Four months had passed since that first letter from the young French singer had invaded Martha's hitherto well-regulated bosom

with disturbing thoughts. One day, after a brief but alarming season, in which none appeared, one came written in a tremulous hand.

"I have been ill," wrote Antoine—"ill unto death. My physicians tell me I can but recover among the mountains of Switzerland. But I am wiser than they, ignorant. It is only the touch of thy hand that will heal me. Come to me; but meet me in Switzerland, my adorable Martha; leave the husband ungrateful, and together we will know what it is to live."

Martha nearly swooned with horror. Elope! Was that what he meant? She elope! Oh, the unspeakable audacity of her bad young lover. How dared he, the wretch! Ah, but how dared she thus condemn him when he lay sick, perhaps dying, and all for her? Might it not be possible for her to go to him, to succor and befriend him, and return to her husband when he was restored to health?

She cabled immediately "Impossible!" Then she sat down and wrote that she wondered at him, was horrified, grieved, wounded—and how could she possibly come, anyway?

Antoine in answer gave her very explicit directions for reaching the little town of Aupré, and stated that in a few days he would

be on his way thither. It was all simple enough. Martha had visited Switzerland some years before her marriage, personally conducted by the obliging Mr. Cook, and was a courageous if not very experienced traveller. Now, as to ways and means. Antoine had written of the income, excellent, according to French ideas, which he derived from his profession. It would be so sweet, in case the Doctor should die, or any thing, to owe all to her lover; but Martha was ever a prudent soul in money matters, and she drew out of the bank a comfortable little sum of her own money, and arranged that if any thing *should* detain her in Switzerland after her services to the invalid were no longer necessary, the balance should be paid over according to her directions.

Then she read four chapters in a French novel and compared herself to its heroine, a most fascinating duchess, and, with many qualms, but unimpaired resolution, fled from the roof of her lord. She left the regulation letter, explaining that she went to the side of the only being who loved her truly. She went as a friend, as sister, but she could not be dull to the voice that called her. She bade her husband farewell with a heart of stone, she said. He had never remembered what was

due to her, and she could not see that in this agonizing hour there was any thing due to him.

Poor Martha's elderly nose was cruelly nipped by the cold, her limbs were stiff with fatigue, her eyes blinded by the strong light that had been around her all day when she arrived at the little inn in Aupré, but she heroically ignored her personal discomforts."

"Take me at once to the sick gentleman, to Monsieur Nardin," she said.

"Pardon, Madame," said the bowing host, "but he is not here, this Monsieur."

"Not here!" cried Martha, gasping.

"Ah, but stay!" said the landlord, applying a meditative finger to his brow. "I may perhaps have the happiness to address Madame de Vivien?"

"Yes!" said Martha, eagerly, for by that euphonious name had she elected to travel. "Is there a message for me?"

"But yes, truly. A letter that I am to deliver to Madame when she does us the honor to arrive *chez nous*."

He despatched a servant for the letter, and soon brought it to Martha with a triumphant "Voici!"

Martha tore open the envelope in wild agita-

tion. It was addressed in an unfamiliar hand to Madame de Vivien, and the enclosure was written in French. Slowly and painfully, with many starts and cries, she spelled it out, and, as she read the last word, sank in a tumbled heap at the feet of the landlord.

Alas, alas! The letter was written by the physician who had attended poor Antoine in his fatal illness. The lover had died on the day that she arrived at Queenstown, *en route* for Aupré. He had no friends, said the melancholy screech, nearer than the good physician. Him he told that one he loved was to have met him in Aupré, and he bade him break the sad news, and charge her to consider herself henceforth sacred to one whose last hours were consecrated to the thought of her. He claimed the remaining years of her life, for though she had not been his wife, she might still be his widow.

Poor Martha was faithful to the charge. She established herself at the solitary pension in Aupré, where many impecunious but respectable Americans and English did congregate, engaged a local artist to use the little photograph as a clue to an immense idealized portrait of her departed lover, and wrote to her husband, begging his forgiveness, but assuring

him that the rest of her life should be past in remembrance of Antoine. She was calm, gentle, autumnally serene. She spent much time in contemplation of the mountains, and broke her heart in an unspeakably melancholy and enjoyable manner. She was important, she was somebody, she was the heroine of a tragic romance. How petty did the village comedies, enacted by her friends, Mrs. Jonas Brown and Miss Letitia Hunter, appear in retrospective contrast. "Ah, said Martha, looking off at the distant sky, "I have lived and loved. What a destiny for one from Minkville!"

The Doctor wrote two letters after receiving hers. The one in reply to that of his faithless wife was also calm, gentle, serene. He felt no bitterness toward her. His desolate heart, his deserted home were avenged by the death of his supplanter in her affections. He could appreciate her situation, and would never disturb the mournful repose of her existence. He would assist her bankers in transferring her account to Beaurole et Cie. at Geneva, and after that the veil should fall forever.

His other letter may be given in full :

"Ah, my little Gaston, but thou hast the ability of a true demon to so realize the great intention

of thy so relieved friend ! All has prospered, all is well. I am once and for all at peace. Madame my wife is no more, but Madame the widow of Antonio Nardin lives in perpetual retirement in the village of Aupré. Mountains and seas extend between us, and for always.

“ There is a proverb, my brave boy, my admirable fox, which tells us that heaven helps those who have the address to help themselves. Thou knowest with what dread I have thought of the day when Madame my wife should discover the talents I have employed to secure our mutual felicity. My friend, that day will never come. Hast thou not seen in the papers that Nardin has inherited a fortune of value three thousand francs a year ! And that he abandons the stage, resuming his own name, and departing to Norway, there to end his days with his Norwegian wife. Surely one so fortunate would with ease pardon, if he discover, our use of his convenient name. If only the fools of papers come not in the way of Madame my wife ! But I trust in that so obliging heaven which has thus far recognized and approved my efforts to aid myself, and the fortunes of chance. Nardin is not of importance to be mentioned again.

“ Come, now, when thou wilt to America. My house, my home, my heart, dear Gaston, are thine —always thine ! Thou askest if I have no thought to profit by the American divorce, so easy to attain, if the charming Rosa shall not be called to heal the

wound in my lacerated bosom. Never, my friend, never ! Had Martha penetrated to the secret of our amiable arrangement to further her happiness, had she returned to me, all furious, then the divorce should have been my protection from the faithless woman who deserted me ; the fact of desertion could be proved.

" But that is finished. Matrimony, of it I have had enough. Rosa is fair, is young, is mild. Shall I render hideous that view to which distance lends enchantment ? Ah no ! I have my laboratory, my patients, my beautiful little pile of gold, which grows each day higher. It is mine, all alone.

" And my embraces of gratitude, my admiration, my eternal regard are thine alone, dear Gaston, and I beg of thee to come speedily and witness the undisturbed felicity of

" Thy emancipated friend,

" HENRI PELLETIN."

" Much obliged, Van," said the Judge, with a laugh, in which the others joined.

" Oh, I say ! " said Harry. " It 's an awfully good story, but wasn't it rather hard on the old girl ? "

" You 're a nice boy, Harry," said Van, in answer to his artless criticism. " Yes, it was rather hard, now you mention it."

" Do you know what time it is ? " asked the

Judge, rising with weighty deliberation. The others looked up at the clock over the chimney-piece. There was a general exclamation of amused consternation, and the party rather abruptly separated.

III.

HARRY opened his eyes the next, or rather that morning, and hopeful youth prompted him to anticipate a cessation of hostilities on the part of the weather. Alas! as he looked from his window, the same dismal sheet of driving snow was drawn over the landscape. I am afraid he said some naughty words as he dashed back into bed again, with a stern resolution to abide there during the coming day, born of that curious sense within us, which prompts us to revenge ourselves for the discomforts imposed upon us by fate, by adding a few of our own invention.

But hunger, that wonderful hunger, which never survives the teens and the early twenties, soon drove him out again, and into his clothes, and down to the piazza, where, with the snow whirling in the bitter wind without, he ate a prodigious breakfast in a leafy bower of green and an atmosphere of summer warmth. After this indulgence he proceeded to the hall, his eyes ostentatiously fastened on his paper, but ever and anon giving surreptitious glances that

at last assured him that she was there, nestling like the bud she was, in the midst of a gay group of ladies.

"More snow!" said Harry, after exchanging greetings, with a gloom that he felt to be positively treacherous, so soon had her pretty smile flooded that gray world with sunshine.

"More snow!" echoed a handsome woman, impatiently. "*I* am going back to New York."

"Oh, Mrs. Percy! How unkind you are to us!"

"Well, when one comes up here for an outing, and is compelled to spend the time cowering over a fire, it is not calculated to develop the social virtues. *I feel* unkind."

"I like the fire," said Harry's little sweetheart, shyly. "And easy chairs. You do not like easy chairs, Mrs. Percy?"

"No, I prefer a side saddle."

"You would like a life on the plains, Mrs. Percy," said Van Corlear, lounging up to the group.

"Immensely."

"So all the people say who have never tried it," said Mr. Lenox, leaning over Van's shoulder.

"Then you would n't return to it?"

"Except in memory," said Mr. Lenox, smiling.

"Mr. Lenox's memories of the Far West reconciled us to the state of the weather last night," said Van Corlear.

"Oh, give us the benefit of them!" came the cry in chorus.

"He told us a story," said Van Corlear.

"Tell it us!" begged the ladies in concert.

"No, you would n't enjoy it," said Mr. Lenox, quietly. "Ask Van for his."

"I've forgotten it," said Van, indolently.

"Is that the way you beguiled the midnight hour?" asked Mrs. Percy.

"Yes, we sat around the fire and told tales till morning."

"Let us sit around the fire and tell tales till night," said the lady, and the young girl at her side murmured a soft "Please!"

"Shall I tell you why I became a failure?" asked Van.

"Because it was the only career open to you," replied Mrs. Percy. "No, we know all about that. I had rather hear something from Mr. Lenox."

"Will the representative from the Wild West kindly come forward?" said Van, imper turbably.

"Must it be something from the other side of the Sierras?" asked Mr. Lenox, good-humoredly.

"Yes!" came the answer.

"I am at your service, ladies, and you shall hear of something that happened

IN THE SHADOW OF MONTE DIABLO."

The two principal rivers of California are the Sacramento and the San Joaquin. The former rises near Mount Shasta, among the sierras, in the extreme northern part of the State, and, flowing through the rich and fertile valley, pours into Suisun Bay. The source of the San Joaquin is Lake Tulare, in the southern part of the State, and its course is northerly through the counties of Merced, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin, until it too reaches Suisun Bay. The outlet of this bay is by the straits of Carquinez to the larger bay of San Pablo, which in turn mingles with the waters of San Francisco, and San Francisco, through the Golden Gate, goes out to meet the sea.

On the southerly side of Suisun Bay, a few miles back from its shores, stands a lone mountain, known to Californians as Monte Diablo. It was here that the initial surveys of that part of the country were commenced, and around the rugged sides of the mountain clung many of the legends of the early Spanish and Mexican period. It was up the difficult slope that the

good Padre Junipero toiled to pray during a period of extreme drought, and, being tempted by the devil with a cup of wine, dashed the alluring draught to earth, thus winning the obdurate heavens to open, sending down a healing shower of rain, while the reviving earth looked up rejoicing.

Broad, level lands stretch out from its base toward the bay, and by the small stream that flows down the mountain side—possibly the undried tear of disappointment that Satan shed when the worthy priest escaped him—in eighteen forty-eight—the terrible, tumultuous, delightful year, when the spark of gold in a California mill flume set the whole Western continent aflame,—stood a large adobe house, where dwelt through the changing seasons a lonely old man. He had a companion, to be sure, for whose comfort he manifested always a conscientious regard and a care so scrupulous as to indicate a lack of the unbounded freedom of affection.

This companion was an elfish and sickly child—a dark, frowning, delicate girl, only a few years old, who received all attempts at caresses with shrieks, and would strike out at the kind hand that faithfully administered the many drugs required to keep the flickering flame of

life within the frail, ugly little body. The patient nurse knew better than most, the secrets of healing, and, in his double character of father and physician, watched over this querulous mite, the only human interest left him after a life of extraordinary vicissitude and fortune. But often, as he sat silently guarding the hardly won slumbers of his daughter, his memory would go back to the time of his youth, when he had held another child—Marie's child—in his arms, a great, rosy, confident boy, who clung to him with exuberant affection, and looked up at him with his mother's dark eyes under the golden curls that were the father's gift. And the old man would put his hand up to the white hair from which the years had stolen all the sunshine, and look down with grave kindness on the small, sleeping Juanita, while the grief for his lost boy fed daily on this renewal of paternal duties.

He has been called old, this solitary man, yet it was an eager life, not time, that aged him, for the eyes that looked out now on Monte Diablo had opened among the Berkshire Hills little more than fifty years before, and had met those of many men and looked on many scenes since. The only child of a farmer and his wife, who had never left their wooded valley even to

visit the capital of their State, there was a strange, nomadic strain in the blood of Charles Morse which his parents resented as unaccountable. It was less remarkable that he should be a student, for down from the hills and out from the woods of New England have wandered many of our most notable scholars. The French and Latin books which Charles saved his sparse coins to buy were kindly looked on by these simple people, who were willing enough to believe that all the fruits of human knowledge and experience were not collected within the walls of the district school, but the wild tales of travel and adventure over which the boy pored in the interminable winter evenings, finding them all too short as he bent his bright eyes and eager brow and flushed cheeks over the alluring pages, were regarded by his elders with disapproval. "A rolling stone gathers no moss, Charles," said his father, gravely.

"I've always thought he favored Elias," said his mother with a sigh, for Elias, her young brother, long dead, had come to no good.

After a while the kind, chiding voices were silent, and the lad was quite alone in the world. His nearest relative was a young uncle, his father's brother, who had quarrelled bitterly with the boy's parents over a small piece of

property, and had finally gone West to live, still unreconciled. At seventeen, with no counsellors, the future of a youth left suddenly his own master is much at the mercy of his immediate bent. The variety of young Morse's tastes assisted his judgment now. He sold the farm—that was to be expected—and started out to see the world. But in order to see it well he determined to first equip himself with an education that would explain the novel experiences that awaited him. He entered himself at a neighboring college, where he soon became known as a student of exceeding promise. His choice of the profession of all others calculated to bind a man to one locality was rather curiously determined by his intimacy with an old physician in the town, a scientist and a linguist, who became greatly interested in the brilliant lad, and finally persuaded him to enter his profession, promising him a partnership with himself when his medical course should be ended. Two more years of hard study; another spent in walking the city hospitals, and Charles Morse was settled in the quiet old college town, apparently to be a local feature while his life should last.

But it was only while the life of his old friend and partner lasted. Him he aided gently to

the threshold of the other world, then, with his first sense of freedom, left prospects of solid excellence behind him and wandered out into the world.

He set his face toward the north. Up he wandered through New England, straying over her frozen fields and through her dense woods with the delight of an Arab journeying across his wide desert, sometimes borne along by the coaches which conveyed travellers in those days, oftener on foot. At last he reached the St. Lawrence, and drifted on its broad bosom to Quebec. He passed through the quaint streets with delight, and it was long before he could leave it for the more modern town of Montreal. That visit to Montreal was destined to stay him for a while in his wanderings, to give to him a few years of intense joy, and a lifetime of tender sorrow.

Walking one day through the odd little hamlet of Père Lachine, he stopped before the door of one of its quaint cottages, wherein he descried a knitting dame wrinkled with the rigors of many winters, and asked if he might buy a cup of milk. The old woman moved her eyes only, then called shrilly, "Marie!"

A slender shape stole to her side, bending till the long plaits of dusky hair fell across the

aged working hands, and a soft voice answered, "Grand'mère?"

For answer the crone only motioned towards the young doctor, who repeated his question with a new diffidence. The young girl disappeared within the house and reappeared with the milk. As she handed the cup to the handsome stranger she lifted her eyes shyly, and he saw in them the soft splendor of the south shadowed by the sadness of the north.

Who that has youth, in fact or in memory, will ask if the young man tarried in his journeyings? As the traveller over the desert comes in soft surprise upon an oasis, fresh and green, and lays him down beside its purling stream, and beneath its plummy trees, in deep content, and, ever after, bearing the burden in the heat of the day, looks back to that time of deep repose and quiet bliss with unspeakable regret, so the wanderer paused by the side of that gentle figure, and entered into the beautiful quiet of her maiden world.

The old grandam sickened and died. The young physician tried to save her for Marie, but medical skill has a poor chance when time and disease battle with it for one aged frame. The Doctor came home to the cottage, and it was a home indeed for three happy years.

The first was a year of sweet silence, broken only by words of love and the soft murmur of caresses, but the second was pierced by a baby's lusty cry, and the third alive with the gurgling music of baby laughter. How the father tossed the splendid round-limbed fellow aloft, and answered the crows of glee with deep bass notes of joy, handing him at last, rosy, breathless, and glowing to the meek mother, who took him to her white breast, and brooded over him like a dove of peace.

Nor was the physician idle while the husband and father dallied with wife and child. The Doctor was soon a loved and welcome figure among the simple people of Père Lachine. He readily adapted his scholar's French to their patois, and never was the healing art more faithfully practised or gratefully rewarded. Alas ! how peaceful and pleasant it was. For Death, the conqueror of conquerors, who invades the strongholds of palaces and lowers the tents of the mighty, could not spare that humble cottage. And he came, as he comes so often, with awful wisdom, choosing the fairest and best there.

There came a day when Marie lay, her brown eyes wide with a pained wonder that the wise lover who helped so many could not help her.

Soon that piteous look of sweet reproach hardened to one of dumb endurance, then faded to blank unconsciousness. There was nothing else in the fair face for many hours after that, but at last, just as the winter dawn was filling the little white room with a flush that fell like the shadow of a rose on the meek figure on the bed the grief-worn husband saw light and life shine out in that supreme moment, while the spirit poised for its final flight.

"*Mon enfant !*" she whispered, with a lovely smile.

He brought the child and laid him by her side, and the mother's hand strayed over the curls that her eyes could no longer see."

"*Il est si beau !*" she murmured. "*Comme toi, mon mari. Ah, je suis bien heureuse !*"

With these simple words of pleasure, the gentle soul departed, and with her the one complete joy of the Doctor's life.

He could not stay in the little cabin that grew dark and desolate with the mild radiance of that presence withdrawn. His large man's hands cared but clumsily for the motherless child, who wailed reproachfully at the father gazing helplessly at his whilom playmate, in pathetic ignorance of the meaning of that piteous cry,

In the next cabin dwelt a kindly and elderly couple named Pentier. The wife was a placid, efficient creature, who readily gave what aid she could to the bereft man and forlorn baby. The husband was known to cherish a fondness for money, remarkable once among the prudent and thrifty villagers, and was thought to be willing to gain it even at some slight moral sacrifice,—otherwise a well-meaning man and desirable neighbor. Like every one else, he was very gently disposed to Marie's child, and was not averse to the young presence in his own quiet cottage. Soon it became constant. The little fellow turned to Louise Pentier with that happy confidence which children show under experienced handling. He cried when his father came to fetch him away. The Doctor, meanwhile, had grown unspeakably wretched and restless. The old wanderer's fever seized him. He wanted to go away, carrying his blessed memory with him into strange scenes and climes, but escaping from the daily torturing suggestions of what had been and was not.

One night he talked late with the Pentiers. After they had left him he moved to and fro in his little home, making arrangements with quick, practised hands. It had all been settled. He had paid the rent of the cottage until

the time when his lease should expire into the hands of its owner. The household goods were to be given to the Pentiers, and they were to take the child into their keeping until the father should return. Joseph Pentier was glad at the thought of the modest sum to be paid for the support of the boy, but Louise, his wife, thought only that once more a child should play upon their hearth, from which her only treasure, a daughter, had gone in early girlhood to follow her young husband's fortunes in the Western world.

There were a few things that the Doctor folded by themselves to be borne with him wherever he should go, and be seen by no eyes but his. This done, but one thing remained, something even harder than had been the putting together of those poor trifles that had once gained a grace from the gentle form they had decked—harder almost than had been the visit at sunset to the low little mound, already growing green as the memory of the quiet heart beneath the young grass. He turned to the little bed where Marie's boy lay sleeping, and kissed the white lids that hid the eyes that were like hers. They opened at the sorrowful touch with her very look, and the man caught the child in his arms and broke his heart over him in an agony of tears and sobs.

The next day **he** was gone, and the little Charles played undisturbed about the Pentiers' door, and Joseph Pentier sat in Marie's low chair of an evening, and patted the boy kindly on the head, liking him well for his own sake, and better for sake of those coins that he brought into the stroking hand.

The Doctor wandered from one Western city to another. Sometimes he would remain for many months in one place, establish a small practice, then, as his prospects brightened, wander on. At last he found himself journeying southward again, and entering with a sense of pleasure the fair old town of New Orleans.

At that time the Crescent City was in the full tide of its prosperity. The long lines of railroads which now exist had not then been constructed, and the great traffic of the Mississippi River, with all of the business of the surrounding States, centred there. No city on the American continent had then the cosmopolitan characteristics which distinguished New Orleans, and the babel of soft southern tongues spoke in many languages.

But I think it was the language of the city that determined the Doctor's stay there. Softened, changed, rolling with the thick richness from Creole lips, it yet recalled the patois

of the Northern peasants of Père Lachine, and it was in French, Marie's mother tongue, that the business of life was carried on. He came to love the quaint, gay town very dearly, and ever and anon a face would shine softly out from lattice or balcony that recalled in its luminous, dusky sweetness the one hidden under Canadian snows. He thought he would send for his boy, and as he grew older, he would point out to him these shy, dark-eyed maidens, saying: "See, your mother was like that." But the call to arms disturbed and banished that tender purpose. The neighboring State of Texas, then under the dominion of Mexico, was in rebellion, and fighting for independence. Many young men, the flower of the city, had crossed the border and enlisted in the army commanded by General Houston. All Louisiana was alive with the fervid, chivalric sympathy of the far South, and the Doctor felt his blood fire as excited voices, in the language he had learned to love through the lips of his dead wife, spoke of comradeship and battle and victory. He joined the Texan army, and was assigned duty as brigade surgeon in a short time.

Within six months he was taken prisoner while attending to the wounded during a des-

perate battle, and carried to the city of Mexico. For more than a year the man who found even the limits of a town or State a restraint languished behind inexorable bars, his restless feet stayed in their wanderings, his eager spirit fretting itself into tameness within the limits of a cell.

At last a partial liberty was granted him. Through the intercession of an influential American resident he was released from the prison on parole, and allowed to practise his profession within the limits of the city. The dull acquiescence which had succeeded his first months of impotent protest during his captivity, now, through a resumption of familiar ways, became invaded by an anxiety that had been one of the chief tortures of that early time. It was for news of his boy. He had been in constant communication with the Pentiers until he entered the Texan army, but after the last letter received at New Orleans no word or token had come. He had attributed this to the rapid movements of the army, though other and less important letters had reached him safely. During his confinement he had been permitted to write at stated intervals, and now with his greatly enlarged privileges, every facility for correspondence was at

his disposal. It was in vain, letters and messages brought no answer. The Doctor lost heart. He remembered Pentier's well-known and rather unscrupulous avarice, recalled the fact that that last New Orleans letter had spoken of the child as suffering from one of the many ailments of childhood, and concluded that Pentier was acting the part of a rascal, still receiving the unfailing remittances, while the boy was dead. He became more certain of this when a newspaper from one of the Northern States dropped into his hands one day, that told of a fever raging among the Canadian settlements, and of the great mortality among children attacked by it. He wrote to the postmaster of the village, and again in vain, and remembering that that official was a cousin of Pentier, accepted his silence as proof of collusion.

Hopeless and joyless he went on his rounds about the beautiful city, and whenever he saw a child he turned his face the other way.

But Time, the Healer, laid a cool hand on his heart, stilling the sharp pang to a dull ache, such as most of us bear about with us all our lives, eating and sleeping and working in fair comfort all the while. The Doctor did his duty, and found the usual reward in the quiet-

ing influence of continuous action. At last the war was ended, and he was at liberty again. With every tie broken that bound him to the past, he turned his face to the setting sun, and tried to forget that grave over which the sad trees of the North murmured their melancholy requiem, seeing always in imagination a shorter one by the side of it.

He joined a party who were bound for the mountains of Sinaloa and Durango, prospecting for silver, and for a while the life of the mines gave him a certain rude satisfaction. But he tired of it and his illiterate companions, and under convoy of a bullion train travelled to the city of Mazetan. The then small and insignificant seaport—its only communication with the outer world through the city of Mexico, or an occasional ship that stopped to barter Yankee notions for hides and tallow—held nothing to detain him long, and he was soon on a trading vessel bound for Upper California. The ship stopped for a few days at San Francisco, then only a scanty settlement of a dozen or more houses, but something in the look of the place attracted the Doctor's capricious regard. He let the vessel depart without him, saying that he would wait for the next ship, with a vague intention of still going westward until the

earth's round should bring him into the far Orient. But the new little town, soon to develop into the metropolitan exotic of the Pacific Slope, held him. There were there some hardy and adventurous spirits akin to his own, and there was sad need for his professional services. He caught now and then the accent of his own New England in the speech of the pioneers, and the sound was dear to him. Perhaps, also, the Doctor was a little tired. The stress and strain of battle, the privation and lassitude of confinement—above all, the bitter certainty that the boy was gone forever, had tamed that roving nature. Ships came and sailed away without him, and still he stayed on in the little port, practising diligently, passing most of his time in the saddle, as he rode on his professional rounds from one out-lying ranch to another. It was a strange life; there was so little money in the country, that horses and cattle, hides and tallow, were used as circulating medium. In these he was paid with a lavishness that gave promise of the opulent and over-powering methods of later Californian days, and he found himself a stock farmer quite without volition. He had no objection to assuming this character, however, and made application to the government for a tract of land. He

was granted five leagues at the foot of Monte Diablo, where he built him an adobe house, and here at last, his travels ended, he came to end his days. He did not come alone, however. Many years after his arrival at San Francisco he had attached himself to a Mexican family, chiefly because the daughter of the house had a voice and a trick with the eyelashes that reminded him of Marie. She was like her in nothing else, but when the young woman was left quite alone in the world, through the death of parents and brothers, the Doctor asked her, quite gravely and soberly, to marry him. She consented with delight, for he was rapidly becoming a wealthy man. She did not make him happy, for she was a sickly, querulous, and exacting creature, very unlike the mild wives of her own nation, and no children came to make the great adobe house a home.

The Doctor grew very silent under her complaints, and, in time, morose. He devoted himself assiduously to his stock, which multiplied rapidly, and, when the Americans took possession of the country, he was one of the wealthiest men there. He had been many years married when, to his amazement, perhaps to his disturbance, it became evident that his

Juanita was to present him with a child. God knows what early memories, sad and tender as the strains of long-forgotten lullabies, the expectation awakened in him, aged as he was before his time. He was very gentle with the sick and terrified wife, and as her weak soul fled from the world with the first cry that gave token that a new one had entered it, he bent over her exhausted body with real grief.

The baby was curiously like her mother, and her tiny frame seemed to harbor a perpetual resentment against the author of her being for introducing her into a world apparently so little to her liking. Perhaps the Doctor considered this ground for her objection to him, and regarded it as a justifiable aversion, for he cared for her with great patience through a wretched infancy into a graceless and delicate childhood.

But his mood became very bleak. His riches were piling themselves up, and of his own blood there were none left in the world but this unpromising girl and a young cousin, the son of that uncle who had quarrelled with the Doctor's father so many years ago. This man, young enough to be the Doctor's son, had been discovered by him in the person of a clerk in the offices of Wells, Fargo, & Company in San

Francisco. The Doctor was not one to keep alive the flames of an ancestral enmity, and he was genuinely pleased to meet one of his own name and race. But the pleasure was short-lived—like so many of the poor Doctor's joys. Henry Morse was not a lovable youth. He was a surly, dissipated fellow, on whom the attempt to conciliate his wealthy relative sat but ill. He was shrewd enough withal, and managed to keep the knowledge of his excesses from his employers, and instinctively hated his keen old kinsman for the discernment he detected in his grave glance.

One night, late in the autumn of eighteen fifty-three, the Doctor sat by his fire, worn with the task of wooing slumber to Juanita's staring eyes, and meditating on the general unsatisfactoriness of human existence.

"I must make my will," he said. "The poor baby may die at any moment, and then, if any thing happens to me, Henry Morse will make ducks and drakes of my hard earnings. They must be left to Juanita, with a reversion to some charity at her death, if she dies, as she undoubtedly will, without issue. And then it will all go in reports and red tape. Well, better so than to grog-shops and gambling-hells!"

As he stooped, sighing, to push a fallen brand

back into the blaze, he heard a knock at the door. The servants had long since retired, and he seized his candle and his stout stick and went to open it himself. A weather-beaten figure stood without in the darkness.

"I have lost my way," it said.

"That is what they all say," said Dr. Morse, dryly.

"I'm not going to beg of you," said the man, answering the spirit as well as the words. "I only want permission to sleep in one of your barns or outhouses."

"You can't have it," said the Doctor, hardening his heart. "I've done sheltering tramps. It's not four months since one of them tried to set my house on fire, after I had taken him in, in order that he might have a chance to plunder in the confusion. Be off!"

The man still hesitated.

"Do you want me call my dogs?" said the Doctor, sharply. "They're not pleasant fellows to meet on a dark night, unless you're intimately acquainted with them."

"I don't much care," said the stranger, wearily. "They'd make quick work of me, and so much the better. I don't know how to circumvent them. I have n't the luck to be a tramp—by profession."

The Doctor's battered old heart was touched by something in the tone more than the words of this speech. He lifted his candle higher, so that the light fell full on the face of the man, who stood patiently still under the scrutiny.

"Why, you are young!" he exclaimed, for the drifting beard and stooping figure had given an impression of middle age, at least.

The man broke into a fatigued laugh.

"I do not feel so," he said.

"Nor look so, unless you examine pretty closely," retorted the Doctor. "Here, come in. I won't turn you in loose among my barns and outhouses, but you may lie down on that bunk before the fire. My bed commands a good view of it, you see. I have a trick of sleeping with one eye open, and if I see you stir in a way that runs counter to my ideas of what's honest in motions, I'll shoot you. Are you hungry?"

"No," said the stranger, with a gesture of disgust, "I could n't eat."

The Doctor eyed him closely. "I guess you had n't better try until you've rested," he said. "You *are* tired."

He turned away and threw himself on his bed, and, looking across the expanse of the great room, saw the other slowly divest himself

of his coat and throw himself down on the rude couch. The eyes closed for a moment, then opened with that strained, nervous stare which shows that nature has been too hardly taxed to find ready relief in her healing potion of slumber. For a long time they lay there in silence, the stranger gazing out into the fire-lit room, the Doctor gazing at the stranger. At last the warmth, the quiet, the unwonted sense of security began to take effect on the overwrought frame. The lids fluttered down over the dark eyes, and with a gradual relaxing of the tense limbs, the young man slowly turned, flinging his arms above his head, and letting his cheek fall against one of them, with a restful sigh, like that of a child spent with play.

What was there in that attitude that brought the Doctor to his feet? He stood for a moment stiff and straight in the dimness, then, trembling, sank back on his bed again. After a while he raised himself up cautiously, and propped himself up by pillows into a position which brought the face of the sleeping man into view. Hours slipped by, and still he stared on, though the fire had long since died out and left the room in darkness.

When the full morning light was streaming in at the windows, the stranger wakened sud-

denly from deep sleep to find the Doctor standing over him. He had food in his hands, and immediately proffered it, saying only, in an abrupt fashion, "Eat!"

His guest ate gladly enough. The profound slumber had refreshed him greatly, and he looked up once or twice from his breakfast with a confiding smile.

"Where do you come from?" asked the Doctor, as he finished, taking an empty cup from him.

"San Francisco," was the answer.

"All tramps come from San Francisco," said Dr. Morse, grimly. "You don't look like a Californian."

"I'm not," said the stranger, falling back on his pillow again; "my home is in Illinois."

"What are you doing out here?"

"Nothing."

"Like the rest of your brethren whom you repudiate."

"Can't you see a difference between necessity and choice, my friend?" asked the young man, pleasantly. "It is because I can find nothing to do that I am going back to hard work and poor pay and a disappointed wife in Illinois."

"Yours seems to be a hard case."

"I'm in the same box with a good many others."

"What brought you out here?"

"Oh, it is n't much of a story. I live on a farm—a little one—in Illinois. It is a poor neighborhood. We work like dogs, all of us. The crops go from bad to worse. The few that own stock have the devil's own luck with it. There was a man came our way a while ago; he used to be the worthless fellow of the township. He passed through on his way to the East; he had grown too grand to live in his old home. He was a rich man, sir, and he 'd made every cent of it out here in California. He told us such fine stories that a lot of us got together and made up a purse; then we drew lots, and the one that got the lucky strip was to come out here and look around, and see what chance there was for a number of us to come and colonize. We 're all about worn out with work, to say nothing of ague. But I 'm going back to tell them not to go from bad to worse. We 're too late for the show. I would n't mind so much for my part, if it was n't for my wife. She 's had too much put upon her, and our three babies seem to have drained the courage with the milk."

"Poor child!"

"Ah, vraiment! Ma petite Hélène!"

Dr. Morse started violently. A deep crimson flush stained his face.

"Do all Illinois farmers speak French?" he said, with difficulty.

"Not much. But I was n't born or brought up in Illinois. I've only lived there for ten years."

"Where did you live before that time?"

"In Ottawa."

"You are a Canadian, then?"

"Yes, by birth, though my father was an American."

"Were you born in Ottawa?"

"No, in Père Lachine, near Montreal."

The color had fled from the Doctor's face and left it deadly pale as he asked in a whisper:

"Is your father living?"

"No," answered the young man, turning a wondering regard on the questioner. The Doctor fell on his knees by the couch, and his shaking, yearning hands hovered above the figure there.

"Your mother?" he gasped.

"She has been dead these many years."

"Yes!" cried the old man, beating his breast and wringing his thin hands wildly, "these many, many years!"

The stranger raised himself and gazed with alarm into the sad, wild eyes of his host.

"You are ill," he said, "let me help you."

"No, no. Not ill. One moment more. Tell me your name."

"Charles Morse."

"Ah! and ask mine."

"What is your name?" said the young man, mechanically.

"Charles Morse."

"You are *very* ill," said the stranger, rising hastily. "Let me call some one."

"Another moment! Where did your father die?"

"He was killed in the Mexican war."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes," said the other. But he had begun to tremble.

"Listen!" said the Doctor. He had dragged himself up from the floor, and seated himself on the side of the couch. He took one of the young man's hands in his own and began, in a low, still rich voice, to sing a sad little Norman air. It was an old, old chanson, and its light measure dealt with roses and terraces and a lady's glove, but one knew, in listening, that weeds had long overrun the forgotten terraces, that the little hand that wore the glove had dropped to dust a century ago, and that nothing was left of the roses but a faint, sorrowful scent lurking in the depths of an old pot-pourri jar.

Many, many years ago a little child had been lulled to sleep by the quaint melody that had wooed the infant slumbers of his mother and grandmother. As the old man with his white hair and his mournful eyes sang on, the younger voice, awakened by a tremulous throng of memories, took up the refrain. After a while it bore the burden of the song alone. The other was silent. The young man sang on softly to the end, then turned his face, all broken by hope and fear and wonder, to find himself clasped to the breast where he had rested in infancy, while the father with trembling lips, murmured Marie's lullaby to her son.

* * * * *

Peaceful years passed calmly away. The Doctor, his wanderings ended, slept in the shadow of Monte Diablo. And on spring days little children trooping reverently about the green grave would drop flowers above the quiet heart of their father's father. And the Suisun still empties its waters into San Pablo ; and San Pablo flows on to San Francisco ; and San Francisco, out by the Golden Gate to the sea.

IV.

"THAT is beautiful," said Mrs. Percy.
"Thank you so much, Mr. Lenox. I am glad the old man's stormy life ended so peacefully and pleasantly."

Mr. Lenox said nothing.

"Did he live long after that?" asked the lady.

"No, not long."

"Tell us about the meeting with the grandchildren," said the Bud, timidly.

"I never heard about it, my dear."

"Ah, Lenox!" said the Judge, suddenly,
"was n't that man Morse the California physician, whose case brought the question as to what constitutes a legal marriage before the courts for the first time in that State?"

"Yes," said Mr. Lenox.

"Why, he was murdered in fifty-three!"

"Oh!" said the Bud, with a plaintive note of grief.

"Ponderous old idiot!" muttered Harry, glancing savagely at the distinguished jurist.

"Was he really murdered, Mr. Lenox?" asked Mrs. Percy, regretfully.

"I am sorry to say that he was."

"Oh, and what became of the son?"

"Ah, that's another story, and not a pleasant one in the telling."

"I think we are willing to risk the chances of unpleasantness in any thing you may tell us."

"Indeed we are. Please let us hear to the bitter end."

"Fortunately the end was not bitter."

"Then all the more we wish to hear it."

"Yes, Lenox, let us have the rest of it; as I recall it, it was a very interesting case," said the Judge, weightily.

"Did it ever occur to you that a man may weary of the sound of his own voice?" asked Mr. Lenox, with a good-humored glance at the waiting group.

"A *man* may," said Van, with a sinister smile. "Now if you had said—"

"Oh, there, my boy; no cheap jokes. I will speak, to stop them, on

"A POINT OF LAW."

It was late in the day when the younger Charles Morse had told his tale to the ears that waited greedily to hear it. It was a simple

little story enough, and sad, as most simple stories are.

The Pentiers had left Père Lachine while the Doctor was still a prisoner in the city of Mexico. His name had been on the list of those killed. Joseph had sighed at the thought that the remittances would cease, and Louise had tied a little black ribbon about the child's throat, and that was all. They had gone to Illinois to live, and there the good foster-mother had died. Pentier was kind to the boy, but he had begun to work for himself when he was scarcely more than an infant, and did not see why his charge should not do the same. Charles was bound out to a farmer, and early and late, scantily fed and clothed, treated with indifference and severity, though never with harshness, he toiled like a little slave from morning until night through many thankless years. After a while Pentier's health became impaired, and he gladly went to the home of his daughter in Ohio. Charles had never seen him since. He knew for a certainty that he had never received any letters after the last one from New Orleans, for he had dealt fairly with the boy always, and would besides have had a motive, after the remittances ceased, for writing in order to have them renewed. The fortunes of war, the

treachery of attendants, the frequent robberies of mails, and the ill favor of chance had all combined to defeat the Doctor's efforts to find his son.

At nineteen, the young fellow, thinking to lighten the burdens of this hard world by helping to overcrowd it, had married. He had, of course, chosen the one among all the village maidens least calculated to be a sturdy help-mate. It was the clergyman's daughter, poor and simple as himself, finer in fibre and sweeter in nature than any of the neighboring farmers' daughters, willing to die for him if need be, but, not having vitality enough for so decisive a step, only able to work herself into a state of great delicacy and suffering. The rest had been already told in the early part of their interview. He was a fine young fellow, but he had inherited something of his mother's yielding nature, and he was tired, discouraged, and beaten. He had meant to go back to his wife and children and hold out as best he could to the end, his only hope being that the end would come speedily, and to all at once.

But now all was changed. Genuinely happy as he was to find the father of whom he had had nothing but a dim memory, I think the chief sense in that gentle and disheartened na-

ture had been one of unspeakable relief that the burden of life could be lifted for a while from his tired shoulders by stronger hands than his, that he could be directed and helped and cared for as he had not been since good mother Pentier died.

Into the father's heart we dare not enter. The door into that shrine of sacred joy is shut against all our cold and careless world. But after a week he grew restless in his happiness. He wanted the final arrangements made; he could not be content until his son should have gone back to close up affairs at the dreary farm and bring away the wife and children. The shadow of that brief impending separation distressed the Doctor. He wanted to have it over. He could feel no security in the possession of his recovered treasure until he and his were established at the foot of Monte Diablo.

It was soon arranged that young Morse should start eastward, and two days before his intended departure, the Doctor started over the familiar trail for Martinez, *en route* for San Francisco, where some necessary business claimed his presence. Before another sun had risen, his dead body was found, lying in the shadow of Monte Diablo, with its face turned up to the morning sky. Happiness and he

could not travel long together. She had fled from him now and again during his life, and when at last it seemed that he had bound her into secure captivity, he was called away.

His watch and money had been taken from him. He had no known enemy. All things pointed to the crime as the vulgar, oft-repeated murder prompted by greed of a little gain, and the usual inquest was held and verdict rendered.

The son, stricken with grief and awe, tended his sickly half-sister, and offered a reward of thousands for the apprehension of the murderer. There seemed nothing more to do for the old man who had mourned his joys perished untimely, and was now snatched untimely from his joys. But no long luxury of woe was permitted him. The young cousin, Henry Morse, who had come on from San Francisco to the funeral, had never chosen to recognize him, and now applied for letters of administration on the estate as nearest male relative of the deceased, and natural guardian of his daughter and heiress, an infant. In making his application he did not choose to contest the statement made by Doctor Morse before his death, that the young man now in possession of the adobe house was his son, a fact made

startlingly evident by the close personal resemblance between them, but simply claimed that the mother had never been married to the Doctor, which, there being no will in existence, excluded the new-found son from all share in the estate.

Now the question as to what constituted a legal marriage arose. There was no precedent in California, and the county judge, after giving the matter due consideration, decided that the proper way was to grant the letters applied for on the filing of the usual bonds, and await the contest which would probably ensue, when all the allegations of both sides would be placed before him.

Charles Morse was notified that he could no longer reside at the ranch, but that, as an act of charity, the executor, his cousin in fact though not in law, would furnish him with means to return to his home. But the son, stirred by regard for the wishes of his father and the memory of his mother, as well as by the instinct to battle for his rights, was not so easily to be put out of the way. He took counsel with his father's closest friend, a retired sea-captain of Martinez, and by his advice consulted with Messrs. Merritt and Page, a legal firm of high local fame. Mr. Page, the junior part-

ner was a shrewd man, and good. He saw a chance for a fine profit, and he was pleased to aid the young fellow with the worn, honest face.

"The case is one of great uncertainty, Mr. Morse," he said, "and you have not money enough even to pay ordinary expenses. But we are willing to undertake it for you on these terms: we will give our services, make the necessary disbursements, and, if we succeed, send you a bill for twenty-five thousand dollars. If we lose, we renounce all claims. I am about to go east. I will visit Père Lachine, obtain such proofs for your case as I can, and return in time for the trial."

The offer was accepted, and Page lost no time in reaching Père Lachine. He was fortunate enough to find a few of the old inhabitants to whom Dr. Morse was not a tradition but a memory, and he found himself in a position to be very hopeful for his friendless young client. The necessary affidavits were prepared and sworn to, and he returned to New York, where for a brief while business and pleasure claimed him.

When at last he was ready to depart, the fancy to go by sea seized him. The Pacific Mail Steamship Company was then fitting up a new ship to go to San Francisco by way of

Cape Horn, and, finding that he had time to make the voyage before the case would be called, Page took passage in the *San Francisco*.

On the twenty-second day of December the beautiful ship passed out of the harbor, and the little waves caressingly receded before her—treacherous little waves that gave no hint of their cruel kindred waiting beyond. In two days they were beating and dashing furiously at the disabled ship, battling impotently with a heavy gale, the engines helpless from the breaking of the air-pump piston rod, the spanker blown away, and the foremast gone over the side. On they rushed, clambering higher, until at last, massed together in one overwhelming volume, they swept over the wreck, and receded, bearing one-hundred and fifty people away with them.

A little later the survivors were rescued by the ship *Antarctic* and the barques *Kilby* and *Three Bells* and with the New Year the brave *San Francisco* sank out of sight forever.

Many hopes went down with her, among them those of poor Charles Morse, for that cruel first wave had swept Mr. Page far out to sea. He gave up his cause as lost, for though the circumstances were such that the court would have been justified in granting addition-

al time for the production of proofs, California in her new and exciting career as a State rarely consented to postpone a trial. Like a young housewife, she hurried her affairs in brisk importance, with a sense that the days were not going to be long enough for her to finish all her work.

The old Captain, Dr. Morse's friend was very downcast. "When I know the store Charley Morse set by that boy, jest found as he was, and how he hated that coyote, Henry, I 'm about sick. That poor child, Juanita, too. She 'll have a fine time with sech a guardian."

But Juanita did not need his pity. The conscientious care for her which her half-brother seemed to have inherited from his father was not coupled with the father's experience, and one day, her cross little face softening with its first expression of satisfaction, Juanita slipped away from a world where she had never felt at home. Soft-hearted Charles, remembering his own little girls on the farm, grieved over the little coffin, but Henry Morse triumphantly announced himself as sole heir to all the vast fortune.

A day or two before that set for the trial the Captain crossed dejectedly over to Benicia to make some purchases, and had not the heart for

his usual chat with the grocer, whose wares were his chief object. He answered the good man's loquacious comments on existing affairs rather shortly and sadly, until, looking back to the rear of the shop, he perceived a very venerable old man, whose lint-white locks showed fair in the dimness. Now, in that period of California's history old men were as rare as "snakes in Norway"; the wild life called for the young and strong.

"Who is he?" he asked of the proprietor.

"My wife's father," was the answer. "Come, and speak to him, Captain. He 'll like it."

Pleased, as the aged usually are with any attention, the old man became very garrulous. Yes, he was visiting, he told the Captain. He was getting quite a traveller. He meant to go around more than he had done. He had been living for years in Ohio, with his brother, a widower like himself. His brother and he kept house together, and on Sundays they always took dinner with his brother's daughter, as nice a woman with as fine children as one would wish to see.

"You were not born in Ohio, Mr. Lambert," said the Captain, noticing a quaint and pretty accent in the tremulous old voice which puzzled him not a little.

"Oh, no, I was born in France. A long time ago, my boy, a long time ago. But I'm strong, very strong. There's wear in me yet. I'm sounder than my brother Pentier, though he's four years younger than I. He's never been himself since he left Père Lachine."

"Good God!" cried the Captain. "Is Joseph Pentier, of Père Lachine, your brother?"

"My half-brother."

"And did you ever hear him speak of Dr. Morse?"

"Oh, yes, and I knew Dr. Morse very well. I was living in Père Lachine when he was there. A fine man, a very fine man. It's a pity he was killed in that Texan war. Did you know him?"

"Know him! He was the best friend I had. And he was not killed in the Texan war. He was murdered here a few months ago. How is it you have not heard of the case; we're all wild about it?"

"I only came last night," said the old man.

"When did you last see Dr. Morse's son?"

"When he was about twelve years old, in Illinois," said Mr. Lambert. "He was a fine boy, very like his father, and like his mother too. Pretty Marie!"

"See here, old man," exclaimed the Captain, breathless!; "it looks like a—Design—from

above, your coming here just now. Wait till I tell you a story."

So he related the experiences of the Doctor and his son, and Father Lambert, his old eyes bright and his old cheeks pink with excited interest, listened and gladly promised all that the Captain asked when he had finished the tale.

On the following Wednesday, a bright, sunny day, the court-house was crowded with a mass of sympathetic people, for popular feeling was all on the side of the son so romantically restored to the father who had been so soon snatched from his brief happiness. When the great case of the Morse estate was called, the attorney for the executor arose and opened his address with a manner of easy and almost contemptuous confidence.

"May it please your honor," he said, "I regret that the time of the court should be taken up by a case of this character, when there is not a shadow of evidence to sustain the allegations made by the parties on the other side. That Dr. Morse recognized this young man as his son we are willing to admit, but do not regard the admission as proof that he was married to the mother or ever recognized her as his wife. We are aware that efforts have been made to obtain evidence from old residents of the town

where they formerly resided, and it is asserted that the affidavits in proof were in the possession of a distinguished member of our bar and with him were lost on the steamer *San Francisco*. But does it seem probable that if such were the fact the deceased gentleman would have neglected to have copies made and sent here as an ordinary precaution against loss? It can only be regarded as an artifice to gain time. The great value of the estate makes it important there should be a speedy settlement, and we here rest our plea, confident that the decision will be such as to establish a precedent in all cases of the kind which may hereafter arise in the State of California."

There was deep silence in the court-room when Colonel Merritt, the former partner of the unfortunate Page, rose to reply.

"I shall not," he said, "waste time in argument, but proceed immediately to disprove the assertion of my learned brother, that there is no evidence for our side. We have at hand a witness, discovered by a fortunate accident, whose testimony it will be impossible to impeach. I will call Alexandre Lambert."

The old man came to the stand and took the oath with tremulous importance. He testified that he had known Dr. Morse and remembered

the time when he came to live in Père Lachine as the husband of the French girl, Marie LaCroix. The Doctor had always recognized her as his wife, always speaking of her as such, and their devotion to each other was well-known to the villagers, by whom they were highly respected. He could not say that they had ever gone through any formal marriage rite, but thought it probable that some ceremony had taken place between them. Among the people of Père Lachine, marriages were often made by mutual consent, and were always accepted as regular and binding by the simple community. He remembered the birth of the boy and death of the young mother, and also of hearing from his brother Pentier that the Doctor had been killed in the Texan war. He had last seen the boy when he was about twelve years old, and remembered his striking resemblance to both parents.

"Would you know him if you were to see him now?" "Yes, for I do see him," was the answer. "He is sitting there to the left of Colonel Merritt."

The effect of this statement was electrical, and, with a few more questions satisfactorily answered, the case for that side was closed. The attorney for Henry Morse closely and

trickily cross-examined the venerable witness, but failed to shake his stoutly given testimony in the least. The summing up was brief on both sides, and the judge arose to announce his decision.

He first stated the law in such cases as it existed in some of the older States, and alluded to the various decisions which had been quoted by the counsel for both sides. He then dwelt with insistence on the peculiar customs obtaining among the people from whom Dr. Morse had taken his wife, his love for and recognition of his son, and finally the unimpeachable testimony of the witness, Alexandre Lambert. In conclusion he said :

“ This is the first case of the kind which has come before the courts of the State. The interests at stake are so large that whatever the present decision may be, it will be taken to a higher court for review. The testimony for both sides has been duly weighed and sifted, and the judgment of the court is that Marie LaCroix was to all intents and purposes the wife of Charles Morse, that the union was recognized as lawful by the community in which the parties lived, and that the young man recognized by Dr. Morse as his son was born in wedlock and is therefore sole heir to his father’s estate.”

The audience which had listened in breathless silence now broke into tumultuous applause, and it was long before the officers could restore order. In a few weeks after the notice of appeal was given, a decision was rendered confirming that of the lower court, and Charles Morse came into his father's kingdom.

Eleven years after a man was dying in the county prison in Mariposa. He was a native Californian, who awaited his trial for a daring mail robbery. When it became evident that he had but a few hours to live, he sent for the sheriff and confessed that he and a Sandwich Islander known as Chiloha had been accessory to the murder of Dr. Morse, the principal being Henry Morse, who had long since left San Francisco. Warrants were immediately issued for the arrest of Chiloha and Morse, and the authorities succeeded in tracing both men. It was found that Chiloha had been killed in a brawl in Sacramento, but Morse was discovered living under the name of Roderiguez, in the southern part of the State, and was hanged for the crime which he believed had crumbled out of sight with the ashes of his victim, long dropped to dust in that grave at the foot of Monte Diablo.

V.

THE party had lunched and broken into lesser groups, and divided again into couples, and a man who walked up and down the piazza with Mrs. Percy said gravely: "You ladies have had no voice in this matter of tale telling."

"We have not wanted it," said the lady.

"Is n't that a bit selfish?"

"Not from my point of view."

"What is your point of view?"

"Oh, I see what certain critics tell me to see, that women have no gift for story-telling."

"You must change your critics, dear lady. They are unworthy of you, since the two greatest artists in fiction that the world has known have been women—George Sand and George Eliot."

"You place them above Balzac and Thackeray?"

"In certain characteristics of passion and imagination, yes."

"You are generous to women always, I

know," said Mrs. Percy, very gently, for she knew that he more than most men might have been pardoned a bitter word for her sex.

"They do not need my generosity, while I have gained much from theirs," he said, kindly.

The lady was silent for a while, then spoke suddenly :

"I cannot tell you a story," she said, "but I can read you one. When Mrs. Brayton went abroad, she left, among other things, a manuscript with me, of which she charged me to take especial care. You know with how many lives her sweet and catholic sympathy brings her in contact. I know nothing of this manuscript. It may have been written for publication, though that does not seem probable ; it may be the record of a most unhappy life. She told me to read it ; when I asked her if it was for my eyes alone, she smiled and said she was not afraid that I would bring it to any eyes that would fail to read it reverently. I have only shared it with one other person. Would you like to hear it?"

"Indeed I would," was the answer.

Mrs. Percy tripped away and came back holding the little roll of paper with gentle care. They found a quiet green corner, out of the sound of gay voices and the tread of pac-

ing feet, and the lady read aloud the written words, wondering what hand had traced them.

IN SOLITUDE.

I have always been interested in myself, both on general and particular grounds. For the first, my one passion—until that night—has been the study of character. No phase of human nature is without fascination. I love to be in the midst of crowds, to see face after face flash past with its revealing, concealing hieroglyph, giving me a chance to half guess, half decipher its meaning. In what slighting regard have I always held those who find their only inspiration in wooded slopes and purling brooks and leafy ways. For me, I sleep among these gentle influences. Give to me the roaring street, the surging crowd; let me feel myself borne on these throbbing arteries to the heart of humanity. Why, how these people prate of nature, nature! What is the very crown of nature—so far as we have gone—but man? The dam built by the working beaver, the waxen labyrinth, honey stored by the bee,—these are called natural. How brief a part of the road men see! So also is the domed cathedral, the towered castle, the chiselled mausoleum, ay, the spanning bridge of

which I see the slender, solid arch with my fading eyes from my high window. Ah, kindly curve of lights, gleaming with magnificent response to my little taper, I see in you the workings of nature as I see them in the opalescent thread the spider swings from tremulous grass-blade to nodding flower-plume. They have called me blind to the face of the Great Mother, seeing not that I caught the higher radiance of her inscrutable smile. Let them love her in her lesser manifestations of bud and blossom and sky-dappling cloud, and small, swift denizen of wood and stream; I find her at her best in her last production, man and his achievement. Why, look you, our furred and feathered brethren do but use with lesser intelligence the material they find to carry on life with; shall I stop at that and say here nature ends? Nay, I leave you if you will, to rest in this elementary knowledge. I will take the higher branches. I will search the hearts of my fellows in the little time that is left me, and it is nature, nature worship still.

Why, how I wander! Well, why not? There are none to care if I speak or cease. If I riot for a while in expression, it is the last indulgence of a sometimes meagre life.

To begin again—and wander off again soon,

I dare say. I have been interested in myself as a unit in the innumerable host of men and women, a unit also which I have peculiar advantages for studying and understanding. So much for the general ground. For the particular, I have had the dispassionateness to see that mine is in some respects a unique nature ; so, perhaps, because these marked individualities have flourished well in a soil richly commonplace.

I was an odd child enough, yet with all a child's love for toys and sweets and playmates ; strangely precocious in some phases of intellect and emotion ; painfully normal in those acquisitive and predatory instincts which caused me to weep if my sister's doll was redder of cheek and longer of curl than mine, and to surreptitiously exchange my dull slate pencil for her sharp one. In short, I was without much mitigation the selfish, greedy, turbulent little animal called a child. Those "trailing clouds of glory !" Shade of Wordsworth, ever spent you a day in a well-stocked nursery ? The ones I drew after me from the heaven which was my home bore storms in their bosoms ; tempests in a teapot, but still tempests. We children at home had our impulses of fidelity and affection and graceful sportiveness, like the puppies

which we alternately caressed and tormented. Like them we cringed and fawned where a question of merited blows arose; like them, were marvellously quick to discern the biggest bone on the platter.

My brothers and sisters were fine little animals; great, serene, rosy creatures who played and fought and ate and slept in regular rotation. I was a little black wild elf. I fought and played and ate and slept my share also, but with less method and more ingenuity. But almost with the dawn of consciousness of the visible world around me came a recognition of difference from the rest which invaded my baby soul, which I could not define, which to this day, with my much widened intellectual horizon my greatly enlarged vocabulary, I cannot better express than by calling a sense of loneliness.

"Do we know any one?" says Thackeray—great kindly shade, all good be with you! "Ah, dear me! We are most of us very lonely in the world. You, who have any one to love you, cling to them and thank God." But it was not *that* loneliness. I had plenty to love me,—more than I deserved. It was a sense of complete isolation, which neither the affections which have surrounded many of my years, nor the intellectual companionships which have marked

most of them, have ever dissipated. It was always with me until *that* night. And I have never known it since.

I remember being taken one day to a church where I heard a remarkably eloquent and brilliant preacher—or so he seemed to my seven years' old comprehension,—and feeling that this might be lessened, that there might be something which would leave me less solitary in the midst of recognized but unexplained facts, if by some chance I could be brought within the range of that stored intelligence.

In the afternoon, long and still and sunny as no week-day afternoon ever is, following the service and the special bounty of the Sunday dinner, I fell to imagining a drama replete with charm, in which the not impossible freaks of fate might allot me a leading part. The programme I laid out for myself, gloriously free from restraining probabilities, ran in this wise: I would have strayed from my unsympathetically practical nurse,—an initial violation of possibilities,—and would have been discovered in the devious paths of the park by the exceptional clergyman who would be opportunely communing with nature, but imperfectly though laudably copied by the city fathers in divers uncomfortable arrangements in rock designed—

on the least improbable supposition—to represent grottos, and sundry delicate vines elaborately arranged to simulate a wildness of which the poor things were most incapable. The clergyman would instantly be attracted by my *spirituelle* beauty. I knew I was not pretty, but I always hoped to find some one who would be familiar with certain laws, not yet popularly accepted, which would so construe my irregularities. He would ask me in winning tones why I wandered alone. I would answer with astonishing readiness: “I am never less alone than when alone.” You see, my range of reading was really surprisingly wide for my years. The eminent divine would be stricken dumb with admiring wonder. He would take the tiny hand of this infant prodigy in his own and prepare, with regretful envy doubtless, to lead her to her rightful owners. As we walked amicably along, from my pocket in felicitous accident would fall copies of “Hiawatha,” “The Yellow-plush Papers,” and “Pilgrim’s Progress.” By what further wrenching of existing conditions I expected to get these volumes contemporaneously into the microscopic pocket of the extremely abbreviated frock in which I was presented to the public in those early days, I know not. Perhaps, like the canny old writers of fairy

tales, I had a glimmering consciousness, never formulated into an idea, of a "fourth dimension," which along about the thirtieth century A. D. shall leave the laugh on the side of the now fantastic romancers. Then the clergymen would say: "And these, you care for these, my child?" I would answer in all sincerity that I did, for dearly I loved that odd trinity, and many others as strangely assorted, according to my comprehension of them. After that he would, with many exclamations of delight and surprise, convey me to my parents, on whom I had sedulously striven in vain to impress my unimportant little personality. They would be duly wrought upon by this distinguished man's notice of me, and would yield a rapturously flattered consent to his impassioned entreaty that he might be permitted to instruct me, during an hour of each day, in Latin and various illuminating branches of knowledge. And then, O rapture! I should know what it all meant. I should no longer be told to go and play, that I would know when I was older, that little children should be seen and not heard; I, poor mite, who was conscious of being no particular delight to the eye and a burning desire to be "heard" responsively. And in the midst of this blissful dream came my mother's reproving voice, asking me why I wasted

the time in idleness and did not betake me to some "nice Sunday book." Dear woman! It was a cruel awakening, but I would like well to hear that chiding voice now. I could hope for her sweet sake that the old gaudy dream of a paradise alight with gold and pearls, and many-colored gems, and flashing white plumes bearing lordly angels, might be realized. No other, more ethereal perspective of eternal bliss would be homelike to her imagination, long fastened to that solid conception of a reward to the faithful.

Ah, she has made the grass greener with her grave these many years, and I shall lie down by her soon. It's not such a bad thing to sleep by the side of one's mother, is it? But I am passing glad of that one waking moment in the dream called life which prefaces the unbroken slumber of death.

I wonder why that absurd little incident stands out so clear to-night. And yet I think I know. They say that as one is about to leave this world, a sudden clearance of the mist dimming the early part of one's stay here, however much later years may remain shrouded, is apt to come. Other recollections of that long forgotten time crowd thick upon me; my gentle memory of my mother is exchanged for a sud-

den sense that is like the consciousness of an unseen presence. I need not erase the childish retrospect. It soon will be among the fading signs of what was and is not.

I passed through the troublous time of my childhood rapidly, so rapidly, in fact, that I carried some of its attributes on into womanhood with me, and have never wholly gotten rid of them. When I was fifteen I was a woman in some things, a very baby in others. It was a sad, precocious, unguided development, but that root in the ordinary which my nature sent down so lustily, saved me from much.

I read what I pleased, for the most part. Now and then a book was capriciously forbidden me, needlessly, I think now, for I had not the quickness in such matters to detect the evil in them. When the days of fairy tales were done the poets claimed me first. A glorious company of strong singers, they caught my puny soul and whirled it aloft in a flame of sound. That was all I knew at first. The clash and clang, the sway and swerve, the delicious, ear-satisfying pleasure of measured melody. Then the thought that was the motive of this thunderous music stole upon me, and I read and read and cared only, after a

while, for the theme of the melody, forgetting in that its harmonious utterance. I can see myself now, a slight, spare creature with owl's eyes beneath wise, classic brows, and the saddest curved baby mouth set above an indeterminate chin, bending over *The Idyls of the King*. I well remember the thrill of half terrified delight with which I discovered that I found Lancelot more to be desired than Arthur, thinking so unique a preference shared with every school-girl.

Now comes an endless procession of storytellers. What shadowy, narrow figures of excellent women, armed with little creeds, ribbon-tied-like compositions, dot the ranks where lordly shapes tower! I see myself turning from *Vanity Fair* to *The Heir of Redclyffe*, from *David Copperfield* to *The Wide, Wide World*, ay even, O last profanity of unequal youth! from *Hamlet* to *The Lamplighter*; laughing at myself the while, yet appeasing the commonplace child in me with the simple, prejudiced tales that bore more relation to my dull, daily life than the larger moving histories of people who lived in the world.

Now is my world of books invaded by a living presence, yet less real, after all, than any figure I find therein. This figure has blue eyes that

are very large and clear and inexpressive. Also, it has yellow curls, hyacinthine, and a band of golden down across its cherry-red upper lip. I am, perhaps, seventeen now, and it smiles graciously upon me. It speaks little, but that is true of it at all times. I think about it by day and by night. I cherish the inevitable faded rosebud. Ah, must I confess it? He has never given me any rosebud at all, this beautiful young man, but I know that withered blossoms are among the conditions of thought for one glorified by the sentiments which have taken possession of me. I procure the flower with coin of the realm and it fades beautifully. I tie together with pink ribbon a number of notes from my girl friends, and passionately pretend that they are love-letters from *him*. I am sure now, looking back upon that time of folly, that I should have been disturbed and even shocked had this radiant youth ever come a-courting me with definite words of proffered love. To have brought him into that position would have spoiled my ideal of him. It was love I loved, or what stands for it at seventeen.

At last, when we have met perhaps a dozen times in all, he goes away from our town. I proceed to break my heart in the most approved fashion, and enjoy it immensely. I

brood over that crumbling bud for which I paid ten cents to a neighboring florist, and I bedew those cheats of letters with successful tears. Then, all at once, I become very much ashamed of myself, and return to my books with new, apologetic zest. Yet it is curious that I never had the heart to toss away that fraudulent rosebud or burn those misrepresented notes.

I lose myself among my beloved authors again. Soon amid the throng a vast, serene woman's figure arises. With delighted awe I read of Romola, of Dorothea, of Adam Bede, of Lydgate. I begin to find Sir Guy Morville a less fitting companion for Colonel Newcome and Pendennis. The striking incompatibility between John Humphreys and Grandcourt makes me see that the evangelical hero has as little in common with Dobbin. Of no one can it be more truly said than of this mighty woman, that it is a liberal education to love her. I begin to put away childish things, and develop with surprising rapidity in this new favoring atmosphere, the most adapted to my needs of any that I have yet found.

One day, guided by that wise, gentle hand which fell on my young shoulders with a more impelling touch than any other, I meet, in one of my prolonged browsings through the book-

case, with a philosopher. I open the book with a self-flattering consciousness of my exceptional tastes. I read for a little while with a sense of absorbing culture in this agreeably miscellaneous manner. Then, suddenly, sorry and arrested with startled shame in my vain dreaming, I begin to delve with earnest purpose into the quarried depths of thought. Ah, how I read! I stumbled along a path made rocky by the fallen stones of my early idols. I sat down often and wept as if I would weep my very heart away, as I saw the temples of my young faith invaded by a conquering host of facts; and again I would leap forward exultant, as the world widened around me and I saw the great thing that life, just human life, is. I was still with awe as I groped trembling to the edge of nature's mysteries, and I laughed aloud in delight when old puzzles were made plain. I lived with them, my philosophers, and I loved them; but I turned back at last to my novelists, dear masters in the supreme science of human nature,—I have always loved them best of all.

Oh, my books! my books! In these days, when I am sometimes too weak to stand, I like to crawl from case to case, laden with my treasures, and pass my hands lovingly across the

lettered rows. Not even the blinding memory of that night can make me forget that all my life through these have been my best friends, my silent, faithful companions.

When I was three and twenty I married. During these years of study I do not mean that that young folly had remained unique. I fear I was always most catholic in my affections. Many an interrupting fancy came, and some brought pain and some brought pleasure, but they passed and left me, unchanged save by the gradual growth of years, in my dear and quiet world again.

Then, when I was deepest in my books, came one who said with more meaning than the others, that he loved me. Indeed I think he did, dear man. He was much older than I, quiet, grave, studious. He told me that this love was born of no passing passion—that was for boys,—but of his belief that there existed between us a fine and enduring sympathy which promised well for a joint life of that serene satisfaction which is the best medium for all intellectual achievement. And I told him he was right, and besides, that I was very fond of him. At that he seemed well pleased, and kissed me, more like a lover than a scholar for the moment, and then we fell to studying again a new writer

for whom he had a great regard, and whom we were reading aloud together. For all this took place in an interval between chapters.

He was not very rich, but he had money enough, and my father was glad to give me into that wise, gentle keeping; glad enough, for he had spent many days by my mother's grave of late, and saw that already his shadow fell warningly on one of the vacant spaces left by her side. So we were married. It was what I wished, and would have chosen for very pride alone, yet never in all my life have I felt so lonely as when I held my husband's hand and heard him say: "Till death us do part."

I think he grew to love me very much more than he had dreamed was in him to love, before he died. I remember well one day when he looked up at me as he bent his dear, round shoulders over his laden desk.

"My dear," he said, his near-sighted eyes wandering over my large, round arms and uncovered neck,—we were to dine out that night, and I was already dressed,—“My dear, have you always been so handsome?”

I dropped a light caress on his gray hair.

"No, doctor," I said, "indeed no. My father said last night that he had no notion his thin, dark girl would ever make so fine a woman."

He turned quite around in his chair and gazed at me steadily.

"Nor I, nor I," he said, after a while. "And yet you have always that look of a little lost child which has glanced up at me so often from our books. My beautiful wife," he cried, with a sudden break in his voice, "do I not make you happy?"

"Yes," I said, in all honesty, "as happy as I can be. Why, what is there that we have not, you and I, you foolish doctor? Mutual forbearance, solid affection, absolute sympathy, fair health, enough of this world's goods, no cares—if only my father were stronger—what else is there?"

"Ay, to be sure," he said, thoughtfully, "what else is there?"

"Nothing," I said, and the world was very empty as I spoke.

"I have delayed you, loitering over these papers," he said, rising suddenly and arranging his coat, that would never look fashionable after he had worn it an hour, let who would make it. "Come, my dear, come. I forget sometimes how young you are."

Ah, my kind, kind friend! only a year later I stood in the long black robes that swept around me in perpetual reminder that my father had

passed over to the majority, and saw the lids close over the wise, thoughtful eyes that had never fallen on me but to shed a benediction.

He was ill so short a time, but I knew from the first how it would be with him, and my heart was like to break when he called me to him and said in quite his own fashion :

"It is curious how this process of disintegration acquires a new interest when what one has termed one's own personality is concerned."

"Don't leave me!" I pleaded.

"Ah," he answered, with his patient, melancholy smile, "one forgets the race and dwells on the individual in an hour like this. I would blot out all the laborious gleanings of years to stay with you a little longer, my poor orphaned lamb."

So speaking, he fell asleep. He said no more, my dear old man, who had said so much, and, in all his long and useful life, never one ill word. For twelve hours after that I watched him as his breath grew short and shorter. At last, when the midnight hour was nearing, I saw his face suddenly soften into that of a younger, fairer man. Catching that glimpse of the youth in him that I had never known, I bent over him, and with that pleasant look of

forgotton boyhood fixed upon his sober features, he ceased from among men.

I was left quite alone in the world.

I grieved for him deeply, deeply, but it was upon the new grass on my father's grave that my tears fell fastest. There came a time when all was dark around me, and it was not a short time. Then the impulse of my healthful youth asserted itself, and I went back again to my waiting world of books.

I studied patiently, and, I think now, with some ability. My husband had taught me faithfully and well. The tempestuous morning of my youth, the noon calm of my married life, were followed by what promised to be an early and long afternoon of untroubled thought. I gave to myself great comfort from the thought that the spiritual struggles of my early days were ended. I could say whatever is right and mean it too. I learned the law of averages—so much happiness here, so much misery there. I led the scholar's impersonal life for three years, and I saw the future stretch out before me, a life of lettered ease.

It was at the beginning of my fourth year of widowhood that a friend, who often sought to draw me with her into the busy current of her full life, came begging me to dine with her on

the following night. That curious disinclination to break into routine which grows upon us with each successive day of quiet habit, made me feel, as I did always in those days, an annoyance at the mere suggestion, for I saw at once that it was an occasion. There was a light in her eye and a flush of importance on her cheek that showed she meant more than just a friendly chat over bread.

"You deserve to be punished by an immediate reconsideration on my part of all hospitable intentions," she said, as I hesitated, "but I am always more just than generous. Pray do not believe I flatter myself that you would come to us for love of me or mine. I come with a bribe in my hand. Calthorpe is to be with us."

My eyes did open then. Calthorpe, strongest and saddest of the singers of the day.

"Come!" urged my friend, "your eyes will never scan the poems clearly until you have seen the poet. He is very beautiful."

"So many are beautiful."

"One might know that you seldom visit the outer world," and she laughed lightly, "but you will for this once."

And indeed I did mean to heed this call. But the next morning I awoke weighed down with a sense of something unwonted. I grudged

the break in my tranquil, monotonous existence. When I looked from my window and saw wild skeins of rain unravelling in the blast of a driving storm, I was insensibly relieved. I have always been peculiarly sensitive to atmosphere, and never ventured out in ill weather, even in closed carriages.

"I will send a note when I have breakfasted," I said. But when I had breakfasted there was a curious break in the heavy clouds, that showed a deep vista of intense blue just veiled by an unconquered drift, and by noon a strong sun poured its gold over all the wet and shining streets.

As I drove through the late twilight to the house where I was bidden, I ceased to resent this invasion of my calm. It always was so with me. I hated the thought of change; once undertaken, it had its pleasure. My friend was awaiting me alone.

"You are our only guest, save the poet," she said, herself tossing the lace drapery from off my hair. "Oh, I am glad you wore white!" touching with dainty finger tips the mass of snowy crape. "Robert is coming with our friend," she said, presently. Quick! stand against that pomegranate curtain. O you wilful wretch!" Her husband entered with

their guest. Robert Sard is a handsome man. So handsome that he has no time for aught else, nor, to tell the truth, has she, so hard must she struggle, poor soul, to engross that beauty and keep at bay the fluttering competitors for his regard.

But I never saw his blue and gold, and rose and snow, shining with the light radiance that might endue a girlish god, though my eyes had been used to dwell with pleasure on those wondrous tints and contours. I saw only the great figure beside him: the head, shaggy with large waves of hair, just frosted; the massive features, grim and fine; the strange, deep eyes into which I looked with a sudden dread. I had never seen any one like him. Never! Never!

That love of beauty which had determined my friend's life in her choice of a husband was shown in all her surroundings. When my host led me in to the room where we were to dine, I could but smile with pleasure. All my life long I have loved color, revelled in it, been almost maddened by certain hues. I have not that finer instinct which puts form first. The place glowed like a jewel: the pomegranate shades dear to my heart deepened to russet and faded to yellowing rose, and were outlined by

old blues and burnished sages ; rare woods tortured into odd shapes of beauty ; plush hangings where the color seemed to pulse beneath a silvery frost, dim and rich as the bloom on a grape ; curious vases, bits of pottery, and in the centre of all a round table, the point from which all seemed to radiate, with its jewelled china and gold plate, its plumes and clusters of strange flowers, its gorgeous masses of tropical fruits, and heaped sweetmeats sparkling in tinted crystals of sugar. I had seen it all often enough and it always enriched my mood. To-night the room seemed too full. Or was it that Calthorpe's presence was too intense ? I wanted to be farther off from him, in a larger, quieter space.

His face and voice disturbed me. They seemed to hold some force which would nullify the slow work of many years in me, and turn my honest effort into a vain beating of empty air. I was afraid. It would be terrible to learn that my whole life was cheapened by the discovery of a false foundation. What was it that made me feel that I must set at naught all that had gone before ? It was not much that he said, and that little was spoken in pleasant words, salted with that fine humor born of the educated perception of congruities. It was the

tone and the look that accompanied it that shook me. There was infinite distress in it all; unspeakable pain, yet a pain better worth the bearing than all the sober joys my life had known. Soon this sweet anguish urged me on to speech, and it seemed that my mind unfolded all at once, as a century plant blooms, and I spoke as I had never spoken before. They were quiet, those good friends of mine and a bit proud, I think, and Calthorpe watched me and watched me.

The hours passed, not with the fleetness that marks most special seasons of delight. So replete were they with spiritual incident, so full of crowding life, so brimmed with the concentrated development of years, that when we rose from the board my coming there seemed something already far in the past.

"Your carriage waits," said my friend; "send it away."

"No, no, I must go!" I cried, hurriedly, with a sense of escape.

"May I attend you to your door?" Calthorpe asked, bending before me.

"Yes," I said.

So we drove together through the city streets between the shining rows of lights that seemed to meet in the distance, the point ever

receding before us as we rolled along. Did I bid him enter when we reached my home? What need? We stood within my sober little study, all the grave lines of books showing white in the moonlight that poured in through the broad window, vanquishing the dim rosy glow from my solitary lamp. We stood irresolute for a while, speaking only dull words, void of meaning. My hands crushed the heavily fragrant waxen bells of the hyacinth at my breast. I felt it rushing upon me—the moment when I must meet his eyes, but I held it away from me while I could. Strange thrills of exquisite awe shot through me. All the old, disregarded myths were taking on new life; all the knowledge my feeble intelligence had been gleaning with painful care for years was blown like chaff before the blast in the stormy sense of forces newly created. Heaven and hell, God and Devil, angel and seer, good and evil—all these hinted, primitive symbols of the mysteries of a Law that governs these mortals who have discerned all *but* that—the meaning of all swept upon me. Then I lifted my eyes to that wonderful face. My soul cried out to him, and he answered.

Did we talk until the stars merged their special light into the wide splendor of dawn?

I do not know. Time was no longer then. Lonely! Ah, homely little word, never again. The hoarded thoughts of a lifetime rushed to my lips. Oh, and with them those ineffable possessions of the soul which transcend thought! At last I was I, myself, full, expanded, expressed. The blinding light broke in upon me. I saw what had been and would be. Phenomena too were clear to me. I knew, that as the world counts meeting, we two should meet no more. What did it matter? These bodies are accidents. Through "this corpse which is man" we had discerned each other.

There was one moment, I remember, when we stood so close together that the soul seemed to escape in sighs from each mortal frame, then he was gone; gone from the sight of these fleshly eyes forever, but he, himself, is always with me.

As day by day this flimsy tenement of clay grows less strong to hold me, we enter into more complete possession of each other. He still walks the earth and sings its chosen songs for it. Ah, worshipping world! The songs, unsung that alone express him are what I hear. He is all mine, though you crown him and claim him.

That night I knew I was soon to escape

from the body. I shut myself away from every one. We could not be interrupted, he and I. No one from the outer world sees me save the faithful servants who have tended me for many years. They weep often of late, as they look at these dwindling features. Ah—the pen has dropped once too often. I will write again to-morrow.

* * * * *

I have crawled to my dead husband's old leather chair. I have gathered some of his books in my weak arms and laid them on it. I can sit on the floor and hide my face against them. I am so frightened, so frightened. And so solitary. It has all gone. I know it now. I see. He is nothing to me, that poet, that man who explained creation to me. That night which seemed to make all clear to me was a delirium. No, it was the revolt, the tumult of forces desperately resisting death in a young frame. I had begun to die then. There was no other meaning in it. None. But it has destroyed all that went before. I cannot get back to my old self. I do not know why I came to this world. I do not know where I am going. And it is so soon now. I am afraid. And so desolate. I think if I had some small, warm animal to hold in my arms and stroke I could bear this better.

He broke my hold on the dear, familiar, toiling, blessed world—Calthorpe. I have fallen from that world of dreams to which he lifted me. That was fever. Is this stupor? Which was right? Which is true? O, what an empty world! Never mind, I do not care. I only want breath—breath. I would not care if I could breathe. See, I can still beat open the book on which my cheek rests—my hand is not so weak. It is “Pendennis,” I think. But I cannot read—I cannot see the words. They were old friends, every one—I miss them. O, for one breath! It is all—I ask—of time—or eternity! One breath—more!

EPILOGUE.

MRS. PERCY had finished her reading, and she and her companion had parted very silently and gone their ways. But there was a rustle and stir about all the wide hall. The snow had ceased, and off in the west a deep, fervent rose color was flushing the massed clouds. Clearer and nearer it burned, and at last the mist curtains parted, and a flood of ruddy sunlight poured over all the white winter world.

“Hurrah!” shouted Harry, in the very same tone with which he had welcomed fair weather a dozen years ago. He stood, elate and flushed, on the steps, cap in hand, then suddenly softened and sobered as he looked up and saw a little figure standing on the other side of the glass door. He opened it gently.

“Would n’t you—would n’t you come out and try the slide just once before dinner?” he asked, shyly.

"Oh, I don't know. Are the others coming?"

"Do you mind coming with me alone, Ethel?" he said, so soberly that she blushed and answered hastily:

"Oh no, no indeed!"

Now not since they were children together had he called her Ethel.

In a little while she appeared, her shy face peeping out from a wicked hood in rosy content.

They trotted off over the snow. "You see," said Harry, confidentially, "I have more faith in my own 'bob' than in all their new toboggans, and I've had it done up until it's just as fit! And now if you don't mind—there's no one else here—I'm going to take you down in that. You need n't be afraid; that thing is as wise as a horse, and answers to my hand as well."

Ethel *was* very much afraid, but so many conflicting emotions were taking possession of that gentle little heart that she could not speak for the rout of them.

Then Harry seated her carefully on his "bob," which was a very original and jaunty toboggan, though thus ignominiously named. She trembled a little, but it was not all with fear.

"One, two, three, and *away!*" cried Harry, as he had cried on the top of the hill behind the academy of his youth, and *away* they went, with a dart and a rush down the long slide, over the sparkling snow, sweeping like descending swallows to the end. Ethel sat pink and breathless, looking up at him as he scrambled to his feet and shook himself like a young dog.

"We came down safely," she said, with rather a tremulous little laugh.

"You were n't afraid to trust yourself to me?" said Harry, not much more steadily.

"No," she said, so softly that he had to stoop his curly head to hear her.

"They call that a long slide; it's idiotically, uselessly short. Ethel, it did n't take us but a little while to come down, but upon my soul, I think if you'd trust yourself to me for a longer trip—and perhaps—one—more dangerous, you know, I'd take as good care you came out all right—as you did this time. I can't say what I feel. Perhaps if I could I would n't be even as half way worth your taking—as I am now."

Little Ethel had never a word to say, but Harry looked under the cunning hood and saw a rainbow of promise shining for him through

the mingled tears and smiles of the sweet face. He held out his hand to her, and she laid her own confidingly in it, and so they began to climb the hill together.

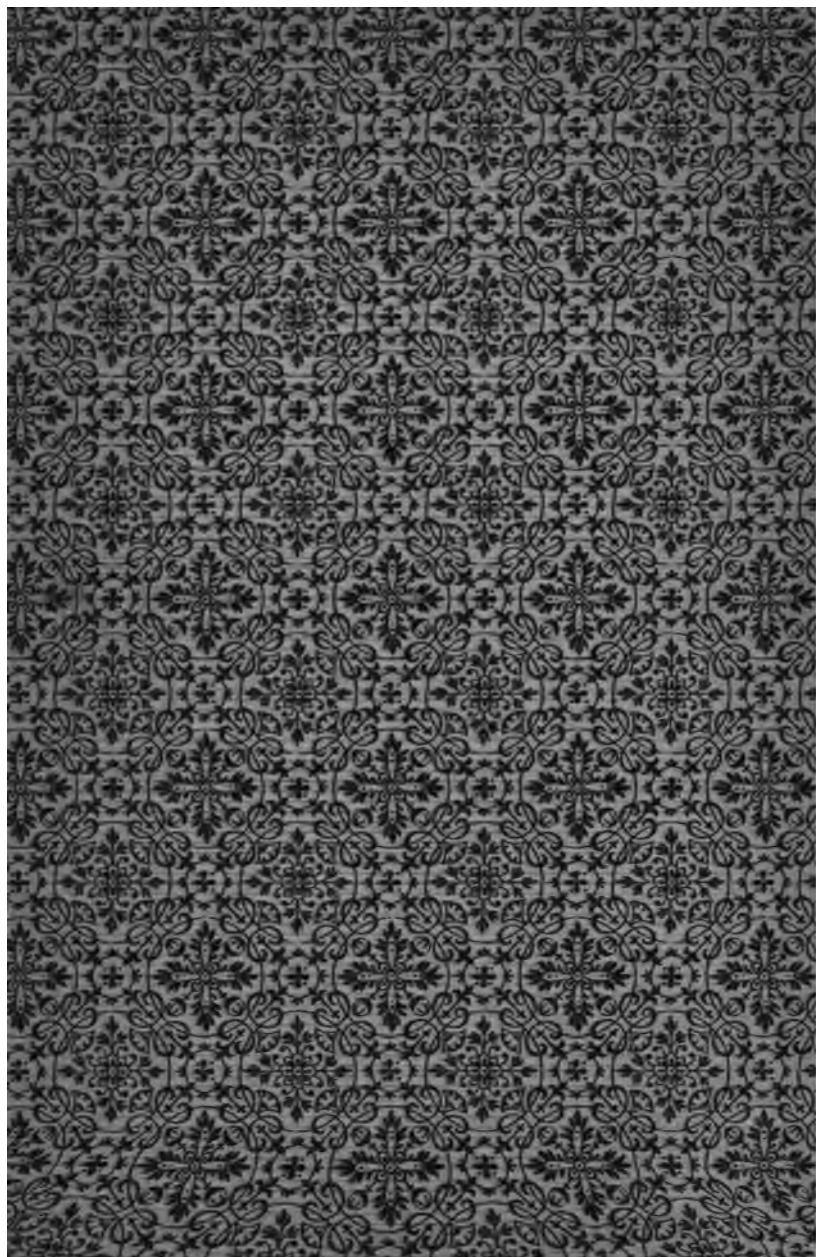




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